This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

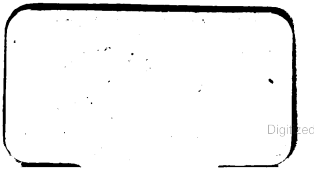
Digitized by Google

HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY

FROM THE FUND OF

THOMAS WREN WARD

Treasurer of Harvard College
1830–1842



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MY SOUTHERN FRIENDS.

Digitized by Google

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME,

And by the same Author,

"AMONG THE PINES."

(*Fortieth Thousand.*)

—o—

CLOTH, $1 00; PAPER, 75 CTS.

Digitized by Google

MY SOUTHERN FRIENDS,

"ALL OF WHICH I SAW, AND PART OF WHICH I WAS."

BY

EDMUND KIRKE,

AUTHOR OF "AMONG THE PINES."

NEW YORK:

THE TRIBUNE ASSOCIATION.

M.DCCC.LXIII.

Digitized by Google

AL 16 42.6.50

AL 1642.7.75

HARVARD COLLEGE
APR 11 1917
LIBRARY

Ward fund

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1868, by
GEORGE W. CARLETON,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

R. CRAIGHEAD,
Printer, Stereotyper, and Electrotyper,
Carlton Building,
81, 83, *and* 85 *Centre Street.*

8192.55

Digitized by Google

TO

CHARLES GODFREY LELAND,

MY FRIEND,

AND THE FRIEND OF EVERY MAN WHO WOULD EXALT LABOR,

AND DIGNIFY THE LABORER,

I Dedicate this Book.

THE AUTHOR.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.—New York after Dark.—A Ballad Boy.—A House in Anthony Street.—A Sick Woman.—Strange Guests, . . 9

CHAPTER II.—The Dying Mother.—A Strange Story.—A Mother's Blessing, ... 20

CHAPTER III.—A Stage-Coach Adventure.—"Squire Preston, of Jones."—An Outside Passenger.—An Overturn, and its Consequences.—Tom's Store.—An Unexpected Meeting, . . 41

CHAPTER IV.—The Negro-Trader.—A Turkey Match.—Nineteenth Century Civilization.—"A Prime Lot."—Almost a Duel, 55

CHAPTER V.—A Slave Sale.—"The Most Perfectest Gal in Seven States."—Her History.—Two Hours of Agony, . . 70

CHAPTER VI.—On the Road.—A Southern Inn.—"Poor Trash."—Snuff Dipping.—Sale of a White Man, ... 83

CHAPTER VII.—A Slave Mother.—"Young Joe."—City Negro-Quarters.—"Am de Chile Free?" 94

CHAPTER VIII.—On the Plantation.—A Southern Gentleman.—The Mansion.—A Beautiful Child.—"Old Joe," . . . 102

CHAPTER IX.—Plantation Management.—An Old Preacher.—A Black Overseer.—A Cute Darky.—A Hard Master, . . 109

CHAPTER X.—A Southern Woman.—A Ministering Angel.—A Black Bookkeeper, ... 124

CHAPTER XI.—The Negro Meeting.—A Log Church.—A Fashionable Prayer.—A Negro Sermon.—Eccentric Exhortation, . 137

CHAPTER XII.—Black Clairvoyance.—Joe's House.—His Mother.—Black Prophecy, ... 148

CHAPTER XIII.—A Schoolmistress and a Wife.—Advertising for a Governess.—The "Schulemarm."—A Death and a Wedding. 156

CHAPTER XIV.—Frank.—Correspondence, . . . 165

Digitized by Google

PAGE

CHAPTER XV.—Russell, Rollins & Co.—The Old Warehouse.—John Hallet.—Tardy Repentance, ... 168

CHAPTER XVI.—Selma.—A Shrew that Would n't be Tamed.—Selma at the Opera, ... 177

CHAPTER XVII.—A Plantation Christmas.—Distributing the Presents.—An Outdoor Breakdown.—A Happy Mother-in-Law.—A Five-Thousand-Dollar Turn-out, ... 186

CHAPTER XVIII.—Family Jars.—The Governess in a Passion, . 197

CHAPTER XIX.—The Negro Wedding.—Grinning Darkness.—Joe's Address.—White Serving, ... 200

CHAPTER XX.—A Deathbed.—Silent Quarters.—"The Ruling Passion Strong in Death," 210

CHAPTER XXI.—Southern Chivalry.—Model Negro-Houses.—A Slave-Whipping, ... 214

CHAPTER XXII.—Difficulties.—An Unnatural Connection.—"Bread" that "Returned after Many Days," 222

CHAPTER XXIII.—A Sudden Dissolution.—A "Character" Worth $30,000.—A Disclosure, ... 234

CHAPTER XXIV.—A Hurried Journey.—Horses "Scarcer than Hens' Teeth," 247

CHAPTER XXV.—Truth that is Stranger than Fiction.—The Story of Selma.—A Brave Negress, ... 253

CHAPTER XXVI.—The Negro Sale.—Mrs. Preston's Mishaps.—"The Sins of the Fathers are Visited upon the Children."—A Bad Tree that Bore Good Fruit.—Hallet Unmasked, . . . 259

CHAPTER XXVII.—The Lynching.—Gaston as Judge.—Larkin as Counsel.—Mulock gets his Deserts, ... 280

CHAPTER XXVIII.—"Dead! Dead!"—"Would You have Me Marry a Slave?"—A Terrible Dream, ... 291

CHAPTER XXIX.—Conclusion.—In which the Author does not do Justice to all of his Characters, ... 299

Last Words, ...

Digitized by Google

MY SOUTHERN F

CHAPTER I

NEW YORK AFTER D

THE clock of St. Paul's was soundi
my outside coat closely about me—for i
night in November—I descended the step
to visit, in the upper part of the city,
woman who is looking over my shoulde
It was nearly twenty years ago, but she i

As I closed the outer door, a small
a tone broken by sobs, said:

"Sir—will you—please, sir—will you

"Ballads! a little fellow like you s
time of night?"

"Yes, sir; I haven't sold only thr
please, sir, *do* buy some!" and as he
burner which lit the hotel porch, I saw
with weeping.

"Come inside, my little man; don't s
Who sends you out on nights like this to

Digitized by Google

"Nobody, sir; but mother is sick, and I *have* to sell 'em! She's had nothing to eat all day, sir. Oh! do buy some—*do* buy some, sir!"

"I will, my good boy. But tell me, have you no father?"

"No, sir; I never had any; and mother is sick, *very* sick, sir; and she's nobody to do anything for her but me—nobody but *me*, sir!" and he cried as if his very heart would break.

"Don't cry, my little boy, don't cry. I'll buy your ballads—all of them;" and I gave him two half-dollar pieces—all the silver I had.

"I haven't got so many as that, sir; I haven't got only twenty, and they're only a cent apiece, sir;" and with very evident reluctance he tendered me back the money.

"Oh! never mind, my boy; keep the money, and the ballads too."

"Oh, sir! thank you, sir! Mother will be so glad, sir!" and he turned to go; but his feelings overpowering him, he hid his little face in the big blanket-shawl which he wore, and sobbed louder and harder than before.

"Where does your mother live, my boy?"

"Round in Anthony street, sir. Some good folks there give her a room, sir."

"Did you say she was sick?"

"Yes, sir; very sick. The doctor says she can't live only a little while, sir."

"And what will become of you when she is dead?"

"I don't know, sir. Mother says God will take care of me, sir."

"Come, my little fellow, don't cry any more. I'll go with you, and see your mother."

Digitized by Google

"Oh! thank you, sir. Mother will be so glad to have you—so glad to thank you, sir;" and, looking up timidly in my face, he added: "You'll *love* mother, sir!"

I took his hand in mine, and we went out into the storm.

He was not more than seven years old, and had a bright, intelligent, but pale and peaked face. He wore thin, patched trowsers, a small, ragged cap, and large, tattered boots, and over his shoulders was a worn woollen shawl. I could not see the remainder of his clothing, but I afterward discovered that a man's waistcoat was his only other garment.

As I have said, it was a bleak, stormy night. The rain, which had fallen all the day, froze as it fell, and the sharp wintry wind swept down Broadway, sending an icy chill to my very bones, and making the little hand I held in mine tremble with cold. We passed several blocks in silence, when the child turned into a side street.

"My little fellow," I said, "this is not Anthony street—that is further on."

"I know it, sir; but I want to get mother some bread, sir. A good gentleman down here sells it to me very cheap, sir."

We crossed a couple of streets, and stopped at a corner grocery.

"Why, my little 'un," said the large, red-faced man behind the counter, "I didn't know what had become of ye! Why haven't ye ben here to-day?"

"I hadn't any money, sir," replied the little boy.

"An' haven't ye had any bread to-day, sonny?"

"Mother hasn't had any, sir. A little bit was left last night, but she made *me* eat that, sir."

"D—n it, an' hasn't *she* had any all day? Ye mustn't do

Digitized by Google

that agin, sonny; ye must come, whether ye've money or no. Times is hard, but, I swear, I kin give you a loaf any time."

"I thank you, sir," I said, advancing from the doorway, where I had stood unobserved; "I will pay you;" and taking a roll of bills from my pocket, I gave him one. "You know what they want; send it to them at once."

The man stared at me for a moment, then said:

"Do yé know 'em, sir?"

"No; I am just going there."

"Well, do, sir; they're bad off. Ye kin do real good there, no mistake."

"I'll see," I replied; and taking the bread in one hand, and the little boy by the other, I again started for his mother's. I was always a rapid walker, but I had difficulty in keeping up with the little fellow as he trotted along at my side.

We soon stopped at the door of an old, weather-worn building, which I saw by the light of the street lamp was of dingy brick, three stories high, and hermetically sealed by green board shutters. It stood but one step above the ground, and a dim light, which came through the low basement windows, showed that even its cellar was occupied. My little guide rang the bell, and in a moment a panel of the door opened, and a shrill voice asked:

"Who's there?"

"Only me, ma'am. Please let me in."

"What! *you*, Franky, out so late as this!" exclaimed the woman, undoing the chain which held the door. As she was about to close it, she caught sight of me, and eying me for a moment, said: "Walk in, sir." As I complied with the invitation, she added, pointing to a room opening from the hall: "Step in there, sir."

Digitized by Google

"He's come to see mother, ma'am," said the little boy.

"You can't see *her*, sir; she's sick, and don't see company any more."

"I wish to see her for only a moment, madam."

"But she can't see nobody now, sir."

"Oh! mother would like to see him very much, ma'am; he's a very good gentleman, ma'am," said the child, in a pleading, winning tone.

The real object of my visit seemed to break upon the woman, for, making a low courtesy, she said:

"Oh! she *will* be glad to see you, sir; she's very bad off, very bad indeed," and she led the way at once to the basement stairway.

The woman was about forty, with a round, full form, a red bloated face, and eyes which looked as if they had not known a wink of sleep for years. She wore a dirty lace cap, trimmed with gaudy colors, and a tawdry red and black dress, laid off in large squares, like the map of Philadelphia. It was very low in the neck—remarkably so for the season—and disclosed a scorched, florid skin, and a rough, mountainous bosom.

The furnishings of the hall had a shabby-genteel look, till we reached the basement stairs, when everything became bare, and dark, and dirty. The woman led the way down, and opened the door of a front room—the only one on the floor, the rest of the space being occupied as a cellar. The room had a forlorn, cheerless appearance. Its front wall was of naked brick, through which the moisture had crept, dotting it every here and there with large water-stains and blotches of mould; and its other sides were of rough boards, placed upright, and partially covered with a soiled, ragged paper. Its

Digitized by Google

floor was of wide, unpainted plank. A hûge chimney stack protruded some three feet into the room, and in it was a hole which admitted the pipe of a rusty air-tight stove, that gave out just enough heat to take the chill edge off the damp, heavy atmosphere. This stove, a small stand resting against the wall, a broken-backed chair, and a low, narrow bed covered with a ragged patchwork counterpane, were the only furniture of the apartment. And that room was the home of two human beings.

"How do you feel to-night, Fanny?" asked the woman, as she approached the low bed in the corner. There was a reply, but it was too faint for me to hear.

"Here, mamma," said the little boy, taking me by the hand and leading me to the bedside, "here's a good gentleman, who's come to see you. He's *very* good, mamma; he's given me a whole dollar, and got you lots of things at the store; oh! lots of things!" and the little fellow threw his arms around his mother's neck, and kissed hêr again and again in his joy.

The mother turned her eye ûpon me—such an eye! It seemed a black flame. And her face—so pale, so wan, so woebegone, and yet so wildly, strangely beautiful—seemed that of some fallen angel, who, after long ages of torment, had been purified, and fitted again for heaven! And it was so. She had suffered all the woe, she had wept for all the sin, and then she stood white and pure before the everlasting gates which were opening to let her in!

She reached me her thin, weak hand, and in a low voice said: "I thank you, sir."

"You are welcome, madam. You are very sick; it hurts you to speak?"

Digitized by Google

She nodded slightly, but said nothing. I turned to the woman who had admitted me, and in a low tone said: "I never saw a person die; is she not dying?"

"No, sir, I guess not. She's seemed so for a good many days."

"Has she had a physician?"

"Not for nigh a month. A doctor come once or twice, but he said it wan't no use—he couldn't help her."

"But she should have help at once. Have you any one you can send?"

"Oh yes; I can manage that. What doctor will you have?"

I wrote on a piece of paper the name of an acquaintance—a skilful and experienced physician, who lived not far off—and gave it to her.

"And can't you make her a cup of tea, and a little chicken broth? She has had nothing all day."

"Nothing all day! I'm sure I didn't know it! I'm poor, sir—you don't know how poor—but she shan't starve in my house."

"I suppose she didn't like to speak of it; but get her something as soon as you can. I'll pay you for your trouble."

"I don't want any pay, sir," she replied, as she turned and darted from the doorway as nimbly as if she had not been fat and forty.

She soon returned with the tea and broth, and gave them to the sick girl, a spoonful at a time, she being too weak to sit up. She had tasted nothing of the kind for weeks, and it greatly revived her.

After a time, the doctor came. He felt her pulse, asked

Digitized by Google

her a few questions in a low tone, and then wrote some simple directions. When he had done that, he turned to me, and said: "Step outside for a moment; I want to speak with you."

As we passed out, the woman said to us:

"Gentlemen, don't stand in the cold. Walk up into the parlor—the front room."

We did as she suggested, for the cellar way had a damp, unhealthy air.

The parlor was furnished in a showy, tawdry style, and a worn, ugly, flame-colored carpet covered its floor. A coal fire was burning in the grate, and we sat down by it. As we did so, I heard loud voices, mingled with laughter and the clinking of glasses, in the adjoining room. Not appearing to notice the noises, the doctor asked:

"Who is this woman?"

"I don't know; I never saw her before. Is she dying?"

"No; not now. But she can't last long; a week, at the most."

"She is evidently in consumption. That damp cellar has killed her; she should be got out of it."

"The cellar hasn't done it; her very vitals are eaten up. She's been beyond cure for many months!"

"Is it possible? And such a woman!"

"Oh! I see such cases every day—women as fine-looking as she is."

In a moment he rose to go, saying: "I can do nothing more. But what do you intend to do here?"

"I don't know what *can* be done. She should not be left to die there."

"She'd prefer dying above ground, no doubt; and if you

Digitized by Google

relish fleecing, you'll get her an upper room soon, and a day or two, more or less, down any difference. Take my advice—don't t away, and don't stay here too late; the ho name, and some of its rough customers wou throttling a spruce young fellow like you."

"I thank you, doctor; but I think I'll ru for a while," and I laughed good-humoredly gentleman's caution.

"Well, if you lose your small change, me." Saying this, he bade me "good night

He found the door locked, barred, and se chain, and was obliged to summon the w had let him out, I asked her into the parlor.

"Who is this sick person?" I inquired.

"I don't know, sir. She never gave Fanny. I found her and her little boy on night, nigh a month ago. She was crying very sick, and little Franky was a-trying to a brave, noble little fellow, sir. She told me out of doors for not paying her rent, and wa in the street, though she didn't seem to care except for the boy—she took on terrible didn't know what *would* become of him. I hard to get along, sir, for times is hard; but die there, so I took her in, and gave her ment. 'Twas all I could do; but, poor thin even that long."

"It was very good of you. How has sh

"The little boy sells papers and ballads

Digitized by Google

The newsman round the corner trusts him for 'em, and he's managed to make twenty-five cents or more, 'most every day."

"Can't you give her another room? She should not die where she is."

"I know she shouldn't, sir; but I hain't got another—all of 'em is taken up; and besides, sir," and she hesitated a moment, "the noise up here would disturb her."

I had not thought of that; and expressing myself gratified with her kindness, I passed down again to the basement. The sick girl smiled as I asked:

"Do you feel better?"

"Much better," she replied, in a voice stronger than before. "I have not felt so well for a long time. I owe it to you, sir! I am very grateful!"

"Don't speak of it. Wont you have a little more of the broth?"

"No more, thank you. I won't trouble you any more, sir. I shan't trouble any one long. But, oh sir! my child! my little boy! What *will* become of him when I'm gone?" and she burst into an hysterical fit of weeping.

"Don't weep so. Calm yourself; such excitement will kill you. God will take care of your child. I will try to help him."

She looked at me with those deep, intense eyes. A new light seemed to come into them; it overspread her face, and lit up her thin, wan features, with a strange glow.

"It must be so," she said; "else why were you led here? God must have sent you to me for that!"

"No doubt He did. Let it comfort you to think so."

"It does, oh! it does. And, O my Father!" and she

Digitized by Google

looked up as she spoke: "I thank Thee! Thy poor, sinful, dying child thanks Thee for this!"

I turned away to hide the emotion I could not repress. After a moment, not seeing the little boy, I asked:

"Where is your son?"

"Here, sir;" and turning down the bed-clothing, she showed him sleeping quietly by her side, all unconscious of the misery and the sin around him, and of the crisis through which his young life was passing.

Saying I would return on the following day, I shortly afterward bade her good night, and left the house.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

THE DYING MOTHER.

It was noon on the following day when I again visited the house in Anthony street. As I opened the door of the sick woman's room, I was startled by her altered appearance. Her eye had a strange, wild light, and her face already wore the pallid hue of death. She was bolstered up in bed, and the little boy was standing by her side, weeping. I took her hand in mine, and in a voice which plainly spoke my fears, said:

"You are worse!"

In broken gasps, and in a low, a very low tone, her lips scarcely moving, she answered:

"No! I am—better—much—better. I knew you—were coming. She told me so."

"*Who* told you so?" I asked, very kindly, for I saw that her mind was wandering.

"My mother;—she has been with me—all the day—and I have been so—so happy, so—*very* happy! I am going now—going with her. I've only waited—for you!"

"Say no more now; you are too weak to talk."

"But I *must* talk, I am—dying; and I must tell—you all before—I go!"

Digitized by Google

"I would gladly hear you, but you have not strength for it now. Let me get something to revive you."

She nodded assent, and, looking at her son, said:

"Take Franky."

The little boy kissed her, and followed me from the room. When we had reached the upper landing, I summoned the woman of the house, and said to him:

"Now, Franky, I want you to stay here a little while; your mother wishes to talk with me."

"But mother says she's dying, sir," cried the little fellow, clinging closely to me. "I don't want her to die. Oh! I want to be with her!"

"You shall be, very soon, my boy; but your *mother* wants you to stay here now."

He released his hold of my coat, and, sobbing violently, went with the red-faced woman. I hurried back from the apothecary's, and, seating myself on the rickety chair at her bedside, gave the sick one the restorative. She soon revived, and then, in broken sentences, and in a low, weak voice, pausing every now and then to rest or to weep, she told me her story. Weaving it into some details which I gathered from others after her death, I give it to the reader as she outlined it to me.

She was the only daughter of a well-to-do farmer in the town of B——, in New Hamsphire. Her mother died when she was a child, and left her to the care of a paternal aunt, who became her father's housekeeper. This aunt had a cold, hard nature, and no love for children, but was an exemplary, pious woman. She denied herself every luxury, and would sit up late of nights to braid straw and knit socks, that she might

Digitized by Google

send tracts and hymn books to the poor heathen; but she never gave a word of sympathy, or a look of love, to the young being that was growing up at her side. The little girl needed kindness and affection, as much as plants need the sun; but the good aunt had not these to give her. When the child was six years old, she was sent to the district school. There she met a little boy, not quite five years her senior, and they soon became warm friends. He seemed a brave, manly lad, and she thought no one ever so good or so handsome as he. Her young heart found in him what it craved for—some one to lean on and to love—and she loved him with all the strength of her child-nature. He was very kind to her. Though his home was a mile away, he came every morning to take her to school; and in the long summer vacations he almost lived at her father's house. And thus four years flew away—flew as fast as years that are winged with youth and love always fly; and though her father was harsh, and her aunt cold and stern, she did not know a grief, or shed a tear, in all that time.

One day, late in summer, toward the close of those four years, John—that was his name—came to her, his face beaming all over with joy, and said:

"O Fanny! I am going—going to Boston. Father has got me into a great store there—a great store, and I'm to stay till I'm twenty-one. They won't pay me hardly anything—only fifty dollars the first year, and twenty-five more every other year; but father says it's a great store, and it'll be the making of me." And he danced and sang in his joy; but she wept in bitter grief.

Well, five more years rolled away—they were not winged as before—and John came home to spend his two weeks of

Digitized by Google

summer vacation. He
to her what he had n
never forgets. He tol
the head of the great
him, and was going to
junior partner, who wa
he should stay away a
sure the old fellow wou
he strained her to his
you my little wife, Fa
shall be a fine lady—
man's daughter." An
she wept, but this time

He stayed away a
turned he did not come
very soon. In a few
was a marked notice, w

"The co-partnership
style of RUSSELL, ROLLIN
of DAVID GRAY, Jr.

"The outstanding af
tinued, by the surviving
Mr. JOHN HALLET to an i

The truth had been
she mentioned his name,

"John Hallet! and

The sick woman ha
ing a feeble effort to rais
than before:

"Do you know him,

Digitized by Google

"Know him? Yes, madam;" and I paused and spoke in a lower tone, for I saw that my manner was unduly exciting her; "I know him well."

I *did* know him well; and it was on the evening of the day that notice was written, that I, a boy of sixteen, with my hat in my hand, entered the inner office of the counting room of Russell, Rollins & Co. Mr. Russell, a genial, gentle, good old man, was at his desk, writing; and Mr. Rollins sat at his, poring over some long accounts.

"Mr. Russell and Mr. Rollins," I said very respectfully, "I have come to bid you good-by. I am going to leave you."

"Thee going to leave!" exclaimed Mr. Russell, laying down his spectacles; "what does thee mean, Edmund?"

"I mean, I don't want to stay any longer, sir," I replied, my voice trembling.

"But you *must* stay, Edmund," said Mr. Rollins, in his harsh, imperative way. "Your uncle indentured you to us till you are twenty-one, and you can't go."

"I *shall* go, sir," I replied, with less respect than he deserved. "My uncle indentured me to the old firm; I am not bound to stay with the new."

Mr. Russell looked grieved, but in the same mild tone as before, he said:

"I am sorry, Edmund, very sorry, to hear thee say that. Thee can go, if thee likes; but it grieves me to have thee quibble so. Thee will not prosper, my son, if thee follows this course in life."

The moisture came into the old man's eyes as he spoke. It filled mine, and rolled in large drops down my cheeks, as I replied:

Digitized by Google

"Forgive me, sir, for speaking so. I do not wish to do wrong, but I *can't* stay with John Hallet."

"Why can't thee stay with John?"

"He don't like me, sir. We are not friends."

"Why are you not friends?"

"Because I know him, sir."

"What do you know of him?" asked Mr. Rollins, in the same harsh, abrupt tone as before. I had never liked Mr. Rollins, and his words just then stung me to the quick. I forgot myself, for I replied:

"I know him to be a lying, hypocritical scoundrel, sir."

Some two years before, Hallet had joined the church in which Mr. Rollins was a deacon, and was universally regarded as a pious, devout young man. The opinion I expressed was, therefore, rank heterodoxy. To my surprise, Mr. Rollins turned to Mr. Russell, and said:

"I believe the boy is right, Ephraim; John professes too much to be sincere; I've told you so before."

"I can't think so, Thomas; but it's too late to alter things now. We shall see. Time will prove him."

I soon left, but not till they had shaken me warmly by the hand, wished me well, and promised me their aid whenever I required it.

When I had given her some of the cordial, and she had rested awhile, the sick girl resumed her story.

In about a month, Hallet came. He pictured to her his new position; the wealth and standing it would give him, and he said he was preparing a little home for her, and would soon return and take her with him forever.

Digitized by Google

[He had then for more than a year been affianced to another—a rich man's only child—a woman older than he, who would have been most repulsive to him, had not money been his god.]

It is needless to detail by what devilish fraud and artifice this wretch at last achieved the poor girl's ruin.

About a month afterward, taking up a Boston paper, she saw the marriage of Mr. John Hallet, merchant, to Miss ——. "Some other person has his name," she thought. "It cannot be he; yet it is strange." It *was* strange, but it was *true*, for there, in another column, she read that "Mr. John Hallet, of the house of Russell, Rollins & Co., and his accomplished lady, were passengers by the steamer Cambria, which sailed from this port yesterday for Liverpool."

The blow crushed her. But why need I tell of her grief, her agony, her despair? For months she did not leave her room; and when at last she crawled out into the open air, the nearest neighbors scarcely recognized her.

It was long, however, before she knew all the wrong that Hallet had done her. Her aunt noticed her altered appearance, and questioned her. She told her all. At first, the cold, hard woman spoke harshly to her; but, though cold and harsh, she had a woman's heart, and she forgave her. She undertook to tell the story to her brother. He had his sister's nature; was a strict, pious, devout man; prayed every morning and evening in his family, and, rain or shine, went every Sunday to hear two dull, cast-iron sermons at the old meeting-house; but he had not her woman's heart. He stormed and raved for a time, and then he cursed his only child, and drove her from his house. The aunt had forty dollars—the proceeds of sock knit-

Digitized by Google

ting and straw braiding, not yet invested in hymn books—and with one sigh for the poor heathen, she gave it to her. With that, and a small satchel of clothes, and with two little hearts beating under her bosom, the poor girl went out into the world. Where could she go? She knew not, but she wandered on till she reached the village. The stage was standing before the tavern door, and the driver was mounting the box to start. She thought for a moment. She could not stay there. It would anger her father if she did; no one would take her in; and besides, she could not meet, in her misery and her shame, those who had known her from childhood. She spoke to the driver. He dismounted, opened the door, and she took a seat in the coach, to go—she did not know whither, she did not care where.

They rode all night, and in the morning stopped at Concord. As she stepped from the stage, the red-faced landlord asked her if she was going further. She said, "I do not know, sir;" but then a thought struck her. It was five months since Hallet had started for Europe, and it might be that he had returned. She would go to him. Though he could not undo the wrong he had done, he still would aid and pity her. She asked the route to Boston, and, after a light meal, was on the way thither.

She arrived after dark, and was driven to the Marlboro Hotel—that Eastern Eden for lone women and tobacco-eschewing men—and there she passed the night. Though weak from recent illness, and worn and wearied with the long journey, she could not rest or sleep. The great sorrow that had fallen on her had driven rest from her heart and quiet sleep from her eyelids forever. In the morning she inquired the way to Rus-

Digitized by Google

sell, Rollins & Co.'s, and after a long search found the grim old warehouse. She started to enter the counting room, but her heart failed her. She turned away, and wandered off through the narrow, crooked streets. She met a busy crowd hurrying to and fro, but no one noticed or cared for her. She saw neat, cheerful homes smiling around her, and she thought how every one had shelter and friends but her. She looked up at the cold, gray sky, and oh! how she longed that it might fall down and bury her forever. And still she wandered, till her limbs grew weary and her heart grew faint. At last she sank down exhausted, and wept—wept as only the lost and the utterly forsaken can weep. Some little boys were playing near, and after a time they left their sports, and came to her. They spoke kindly to her, and it gave her strength. She rose, and walked on again. A hack passed her, and she got into it. After a long hour she stood once more before the old warehouse. It was late in the afternoon, and she had eaten nothing all day, and was very faint and tired; but, summoning all her strength, she at last opened the door of the old counting room.

A tall, spare, pleasant-faced man was standing at the desk, and she asked him if Mr. John Hallet was there.

"No, madam; he's in Europe."

"When will he come back, sir?"

"Not for a year;" and the man raised his glasses and looked at her.

Her last hope failed, and with a heavy, crushing pain in her heart, and a dull, dizzy feeling in her head, she turned to go. As she staggered away, a hand was placed gently on her arm, and a mild voice said:

Digitized by Google

"Thee is ill; sit down."

She took the proffered seat, and an old gentleman came out of the inner office.

"What! what's this, David?" he asked. "What ails the young woman?"

[She was then not quite seventeen.]

"She's ill, sir," said David.

"Only a little tired, sir. I shall be better soon."

"But thee *is* ill, my child; thee looks so. Come here, Kate!" and the old gentleman raised his voice as if speaking to some one in the inner room. The sick girl lifted her eyes, and saw a blue-eyed, golden-haired young woman, not quite so old as she was.

"She seems very sick, father. Please, David, get some water;" and the young lady undid the poor girl's bonnet, and bathed her temples with the cool, grateful fluid. After a while the old gentleman asked:

"What brought thee here, young woman?"

"I came to see John—Mr. Hallet, I mean, sir."

"Thee knows John, then?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Where does thee live?"

She was about to say that she had no home, but, checking herself—for it would seem strange that a young girl who knew John Hallet should be homeless—she answered:

"In New Hampshire. I live near old Mr. Hallet's, sir. I came to see John, because I've known him ever since I was a child."

She drank some water, and after a little time rose to leave. As she turned toward the door, the thought of going, with her

Digitized by Google

great sorrow, out into the wide, desolate world, crossed her mind, the heavy, crushing pain came again into her heart, the dull, dizzy feeling into her head, the room reeled, and she fell to the floor.

It was after dark when she came to herself. She was lying on a bed in a large, splendidly furnished apartment, and the same old gentleman and the same young girl were with her. Another old gentleman was there, and as she opened her eyes, he said:

"She will be better soon; her nervous system has had a severe shock; the difficulty is there. If you could get her to confide in you, 'twould relieve her; it is *hidden* grief that kills people. Come, my child, take this," and he held a fluid to her lips. She drank it, and in a few moments sank into a deep slumber.

It was late on the following morning when she awoke, and found the young girl still at her bedside.

"You are better now. A few days of quiet rest will make you well," said the young lady.

The kind, loving words, almost the first she ever heard from woman, went to her heart, and she wept bitterly as she replied:

"Oh! no, there is no rest—no more rest for me!"

"Why so? What is it that grieves you? Tell me. It will ease your pain to let me share it with you."

She told her, but she withheld his name. Once it rose to her lips, but she thought how those good people would scorn him, how Mr. Russell would cast him off, how his prospects would be blasted, and she kept it back.

"And that is the reason you went to John? You knew

Digitized by Google

what a good, Christian man he is, and you thought he would aid you?"

"Yes!" said the sick girl.

It was thus she recompensed him for robbing her of home, of honor, and of peace!

Kate told her father the story, and the good old man gave Fanny a room in one of his tenement houses, and there, a few months later, she gave birth to a little boy and girl. She was very sick, but Kate provided for her wants, procured a nurse, and a physician, and gave her what she needed more than all else—kindness and sympathy.

Previous to her sickness she had supported herself by her needle, and when she was sufficiently recovered, again had recourse to it. Her earnings were scanty, for she was not strong, but they were eked out by an occasional remittance from her aunt. This good lady still adhered to her sock-knitting, straw-braiding habits, but, to her praise be it spoken, had turned her back resolutely on her benighted brethren and sisters of the Feejee Islands.

Thus nearly a year wore away, when her little girl sickened and died. She felt a mother's pang at first, but she shed no tears, for she knew it was "well with the child;" that it had gone where it would never know a fate like hers.

The watching with it, added to her other labors, undermined her health. The remittance from her aunt did not come as usual, and though she paid no rent, she soon found herself unable to earn a support. The Russells had been so good, so kind, had done so much for her, that she could not ask them for more. What, then, should she do? One day, while she was in this strait, Kate came to see her, and casually mentioned

Digitized by Google

that John Hallet had returned. She struggled with her pride for a time, but at last made up her mind to apply to him. She wrote to him; told him of her struggles, of her illness, of her many sufferings, of her little boy—his image, his child—then playing at her feet, and she besought him, by the love he bore her in their childhood, not to let his once affianced wife, and his poor, innocent child, STARVE!

Long weeks went by, but no answer came; and again she wrote him.

One day, not long after sending this last letter, as she was crossing the Common to her attic in Charles street, she met him. He was alone, and saw her, but attempted to pass her without recognition. She stood squarely in his way, and told him she *would* be heard. He admitted having received her letters, but said he could do nothing for her; that the brat was not *his;* that she must not attempt to fasten on *him* the fruit of her debaucheries; that no one would believe her if she did; and he added, as he turned away, that he was a married man, and a Christian, and could not be seen talking with a lewd woman.

She was stunned. She sank down on one of the benches near, and tried to weep; but the tears would not come. For the first time since he had so deeply wronged her, she felt a bitter feeling rising in her heart. She rose, and turned her steps up Beacon Hill toward Mr. Russell's, fully determined to tell Kate all. She was admitted, and shown to Miss Russell's room. She told Kate how she had met her seducer, and how he had cast her off.

"Who is he?" asked Kate. "Tell me, and father will publish him from one end of the universe to the other! He does not deserve to live."

Digitized by Google

His name trembled on her tongue. A moment more, and John Hallet had been a ruined man, branded with a mark that would have followed him through the world. But she paused; the vision of his wife, of the innocent child just born to him, rose before her, and the words melted away from her lips unspoken.

Kate spoke kindly and encouragingly to her, but she heeded her not. One only thought had possession of her: how could she throw off the mighty load that was pressing on her soul?

After a time, she rose and left the house. As she walked down Beacon street, the sun was sinking in the west, and its red glow mounted midway up the heavens. As she looked at it, the sky seemed one great molten sea, its hot, lurid waves surging all around her. She thought it came nearer; that it set on fire the green Common and the great houses, and shot fierce, hot flames through her brain and into her very soul For a moment she was paralyzed, and sank to the ground; then, springing to her feet, she flew to her child. She bounded down the long hill, and up the steep stairways, and burst into the room of the good woman who was tending him, shouting:

"Fire! fire! The world is on fire! Run! run! the world is on fire!"

She caught him up, and darted away. She flew down Charles street, across the Common, and through the crowded thoroughfares, till she reached India Wharf, all the while muttering, "Water, water!"—water, to quench the fire in her blood, in her brain, in her very soul.

She paused on the pier, and gazed for a moment at the dark, slimy flood; then she plunged down, down, where all is forgetfulness!

Digitized by Google

She had a dim recollection of a storm at sea; of a vessel thrown violently on its beam ends; of a great tumult, and of voices louder than she ever heard before—voices that rose above the howling of the tempest and the surging of the great waves—calling out: "All hands to clear away the foremast!" But she knew nothing certain. All was chaos.

The next thing she remembered, was waking one morning in a room about twelve feet square, with a small grated opening in the door. The sun had just risen, and she was lying on a low, narrow bed, whose clothing was spotlessly white and clean. Her little boy was sleeping by her side. His cheeks had a rosier, healthier hue than they ever wore before; and as she turned down the coverlet, she saw he had grown wonderfully. She could hardly credit her senses. Could that be *her* child?

She spoke to him. He opened his eyes, and smiled, and put his little mouth up to hers, saying, "Kiss, mamma; kiss Fanky." She took him in her arms, and covered him with kisses. Then she rose to dress herself. A strange but neat and tidy gown was on the chair, and she put it on; it fitted exactly. Franky rolled over to the front of the bed, and putting first one little foot out, and then the other, let himself down to the floor. "Can it be?" she thought; "can he both walk and talk?" Soon she heard the bolt turning in the door. It opened, and a pleasant, elderly woman, with a large bundle of keys at her girdle, entered the room.

"And how do you do this morning, my daughter?" she asked.

"Very well, ma'am. Where am I?"

"You ask where? Then you *are* well. You haven't been, for a long, long time, my child."

Digitized by Google

"And *where* am I, ma'am?"

"Why, you are here—at Bloomingdale."

"How long have I been here?"

"Let me see; it must be near fifteen months, now."

"And who brought me here?"

"A captain of a vessel. He was just hauling out of the dock at Boston, when you jumped into the water with Franky. One of his men sprang overboard, and saved you. The vessel couldn't put back, so he brought you here."

"Merciful heaven! did I do that?"

"Yes. You must have been sorely troubled, my child. But never mind; it is all over now. But hasn't Franky grown? Isn't he a handsome boy? Come here to grandma, my baby." The good woman sat down on a chair, and the little fellow ran to her, put his small arms about her neck, and kissed her over and over again. Children are intuitive judges of character; no really bad man or woman ever had the love of a child.

"Yes, he *has* grown. You call him Franky, do you?"

"Yes; we didn't know his name. What had you named him?"

"John Hallet."

As she spoke those words a sharp pang shot through her heart. It was well that her child had another name.

She was soon sufficiently recovered to leave the asylum. By the kind offices of the matron, she obtained employment in a cap factory, and a plain but comfortable boarding place in the lower part of the city. She worked at the shop, and left Franky during the day with her landlady, a kind-hearted but poor woman. Her earnings were but three dollars a week,

Digitized by Google

and their board was two and a quarter; but on the balance she contrived to provide herself and her child with clothes. The only luxury she indulged in was an occasional *walk* on Sunday to Bloomingdale, to see her friend, the good matron.

Thus things went on for two years; and if not happy, she was at least comfortable. Her father never relented; but her aunt wrote her often, and there was comfort in the thought that at least one of her early friends had not cast her off. That good lady, too, sent her now and then small remittances, but they came few and far between; for as the pious woman grew older, her heart gradually returned to its first love—the poor heathen.

Before leaving the asylum, she wrote to Kate Russell. She told her of all that had happened as far as she knew, and thanked her for all her goodness and kindness to her. She waited some weeks, but no answer came; and then she wrote again. Still no answer came, though that time she waited two or three months. Fearing that something had befallen Kate, she then mustered courage to write Mr. Russell. Still she got no reply, and she reluctantly concluded—though she had not asked them for aid—that they had ceased to feel interested in her.

"They had not, madam," I exclaimed. "Kate has often spoken most kindly of you. She wanted to come here to-day; but I did not know this, and I was unwilling to bring her."

She looked at me with a strange surprise. Her eyes lighted, and her face beamed, as she said: "And you know *her*, too!"

"Know her? She will soon be my wife."

Digitized by Google

"And you will tell her how much I love her—how grateful I am to her?"

"I will," I replied. I did not say, as I might have said, that Hallet had access to Mr. Russell's mails, at the time she wrote, and, knowing her handwriting, he had undoubtedly intercepted her letters.

After a long pause, she resumed her story.

At the end of those two years, a financial panic swept over the country, prostrating the great houses, and sending want and suffering into the attics—not homes, for they have none—of the poor sewing women. The firm that employed her failed, and Fanny was thrown out of work. She went to her friend the matron, and she interested some "benevolent" ladies in her behalf, who gave her shirts to make at twenty-five cents apiece! She could hardly do enough to pay her board; but she could work at home with Franky, and that was a comfort, for he was growing to be a bright, affectionate boy.

About this time, her aunt and the good matron died. She mourned for them sincerely, for they were all the friends she had.

The severe times affected her landlady. Being unable to pay her rent, she was sold out by the sheriff, and Fanny had to seek other lodgings. She then took a little room, and lived by herself.

The death of the matron was a great calamity, for her "benevolent" friends lost interest in her, and soon took from her the poor privilege of making shirts at twenty-five cents apiece! When this befell her, she had but four dollars and twenty cents in the world. This she made furnish food to herself and her child for four long weeks, while she vainly sought

Digitized by Google

for work. She offered to do anything—to sew, scrub, cook, wash—anything; but no! there was nothing for her—NOTHING! She must drain the cup to the very dregs, that the vengeance of God—and He would not be just if He did not take terrible vengeance on crime like his—might sink John Hallet to the lowest hell!

For four days she had not tasted food. Her child was sick. She had *begged* a few crumbs for him, but even *he* had eaten nothing all day. Then the tempter came, and—why need I say it?—she sinned.

Some months after that, she noticed in the evening paper, among the arrivals at the Astor House, the name of John Hallet. That night she went to him. She was shown to his room, and, rapping at the door, was asked to "walk in." She stepped inside, and stood before him. He sprang from his seat, and told her to leave him. She begged him to hear her—for only one moment to hear her. He stamped on the floor in rage, and told her to go! She did not go, for she showed him the pit of infamy into which she had fallen, and prayed him, as he hoped for heaven, as he loved his own child, to save her! Then, with terrible curses, he opened the door, laid his hands upon her, and—thrust her from the room!

Why should I tell how, step by step, she went down; how want came upon her; how disease fastened its fangs on her vitals; how Death walked with her up and down Broadway in the gaslight; how, in her very hours of shame, there came to her visions of the innocent past—thoughts of what she *might* have been, and of what she *was*?

As she finished the tale, I rose from my seat, and while tears filled my eyes, said: "Rest easy, my poor girl! As

Digitized by Google

sure as God lives, you shall be avenged. John Hallet shall feel the misery he has brought upon you. I will pull him down—down so low, that the very beggars shall hoot at him in the streets!"

"Oh! no; do not harm him! Leave him to God. He may yet repent!"

The long exertion had exhausted her, and she seemed to be sinking rapidly. I felt of her pulse—it scarcely beat; I passed my hand up her arm—it was icy cold to the elbow! She was indeed dying. Giving her some of the cordial, I called her little boy.

When we entered, she took each of us by the hand, and said to Franky: "My child—your mother is going away—from you. Be a good boy—love this gentleman—he will take care of you!" Then to me she said: "Be kind to him, sir. He is—a good child!"

"Have comfort, madam; he shall be my son. Kate will be a mother to him!"

"Bless you! bless her! A mother's blessing will be on you! The blessing of God—will be on you;—and if the dead can come back—to comfort those they love—I will come back—and comfort *you!*"

I do not know—I cannot know, till the veil which hides her world from ours is lifted from my eyes; but there have been times—many times—when Kate and I have thought she was keeping her word!

For a half hour she lay without speaking, still holding our hands in hers. Then, in a low tone—so low that I had to bend down to hear—she said:

"Oh! is it not beautiful! Don't you hear? And look!

Digitized by Google

oh, look! And my mother, too! Oh! it is too bright for such as I!"

The heavenly gates had opened to her! She had caught a vision of the better land!

In a moment she said:

"Farewell, my friend—my child—I will ——" Then a low sound rattled in her throat, and she passed away, just as the last rays of the winter sun streamed through the low window. One of its bright beams rested on her face, and lingered there till we laid her away forever.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

A STAGE-COACH ADVENTURE.

It was five years after the events recorded in the previous chapter, when, one day late in October, I started on my annual tour among the Southern correspondents of the mercantile house of which I was then a member. Arriving at Richmond shortly after noon, I took a hasty meal at the wretched restaurant near the railway station, and seating myself in one of the rickety cars, proceeded on my journey. As the train moved off from the depot, a hand was placed on my arm, and a familiar voice said:

"Lord bless me! Kirke, is this you?"

Looking up, I saw Mr. Robert Preston—or, as he was known among his acquaintance, "Squire Preston of Jones"—a gentleman whose Northern business I had transacted for several years. He had been on a visit to some Virginia relatives, and was returning to his plantation on the Trent, about twenty miles from Newbern. Though I had never been at his home, he had often visited mine, and we were well—in fact, intimately acquainted. I soon explained that I was on the way to New Orleans, and mentioned that I might, on my return, seek the route to his plantation. He urged me to visit it at

Digitized by Google

once, and I finally consented to do so. We rode on by the cars as far as Goldsboro, and there, after a few hours' rest, and a light breakfast of corn-cake, hominy, and bacon, took seats on the stage, which then was the only public conveyance to Newbern.

Preston was an intelligent, cultivated gentleman, and, at that time, appeared to be about thirty-three years of age. He was tall, athletic, and of decidedly prepossessing appearance; and, though somewhat careless in his dress, had a simple dignity about him that is not furnished by the tailor. The firm lines about his mouth, his strong jaw, wide nostrils, and large nose—straight as if cut after a bevel—indicated a resolute, determined character; but his large, dreamy eyes—placed far apart, as if to give fit proportion to his broad, overhanging brows—showed that his nature was as gentle and tender as a woman's. He spoke with the broad Southern accent, and his utterance was usually slow and hesitating, and his manner quiet and deliberate; but I had seen him when his words came like a torrent of hot lava, when his eyes flashed fire, his thin nostrils opened and shut, and his whole frame seemed infused with the power and energy of the steam engine.

Educated for the ministry, he had been in early life a popular preacher in the Baptist denomination, but at the date of which I am writing, he was devoting himself to the care of his plantation, and preached only now and then, when away from home, or when the little church at Trenton was without a pastor. Altogether he was a man to be remarked upon. A stranger casually meeting him, would turn back, and involuntarily ask: "Who is he?"

Only five of the nine seats inside the stage were occupied,

Digitized by Google

but as the day, though cold, was clear and pleasant, we mounted the box, and took the vacant places beside the driver. That worthy was a rough, surly character, with a talent for profanity truly wonderful. His horses were lean, half-starved quadrupeds, with ribs protruding from their sides like hoops from a whiskey barrel, and he accounted for their condition, and for the scarcity of fences on the highroad, by saying that the stage owners fed them on rails; but I suspected that the constant curses he discharged at their heads, had worried the flesh off their bones, and induced the fences to move to a less dangerous latitude.

On the top of the coach, coiled away on a pile of horse blankets, was a woman whose dress and appearance designated her as one of the species of "white trash" known in North Carolina as "clay-eaters." She was about thirty years of age, and, if her skin had been bleached, and her teeth introduced to a scrubbing brush, might have passed for being tolerably good-looking. After a number of preliminary cracks of the whip, and sundry oaths and loud shouts administered to the "leaders," the driver got under way, and we were soon jolting—at a speed of about four miles an hour—over the "slews" and ruts made by the recent rains. Shortly after we started, the woman said to me:

"I say, stranger, ye han't no 'backer 'bout ye, hev ye?"

I was about to say I had none, when Preston handed her a paper of "Richmond Sweet." Without pausing to thank him, she coolly stuffed nearly a half of it into her mouth. My companion did not seem at all surprised, but I remarked:

"You do not *smoke*, then, madam?"

"Oh! yas, I smokes; but I durned sight d'ruther chaw."

Digitized by Google

"Let me give you a cigar," I said, taking one from my pocket, and winking at Preston.

"I never smokes them sort o' things; I takes nat'rally ter pipes—did when I'se a gal," she replied, ejecting a mouthful of saliva of the color of her skin.

"This gentleman," said the Squire, smiling, "isn't fully up to our ways. He thinks it queer that women chew tobacco."

"Quar thet wimmin chaws! Han't the' as much right ter as ye? *I* reckon what's good fur th' gander 'll do fur th' goose!"

"Good logic, that," said Preston, laughing.

The woman kept on expectorating for a time, when she again spoke to my companion:

"I say! ye b'long ter Newbern, doan't ye?"

"No, not now; but I live near there."

"Ye doan't know a feller down thar called Mulock, I doan't s'pose—Bony Mulock?"

"Yes, I do; I know him well."

"So does I. I'm gwine ter see 'im."

"Where were you acquainted?"

"Up ter Harnett—I b'long thar—nigh on ter Chalk Level. He war raised thar."

"Yes, I know; but he left there long ago."

"Nigh on ter nine year. I'm his wife."

"You his wife!" exclaimed the Squire, turning round and looking at her.

"Yas. He put eöut nine year ago, and I han't heerd nor seed nary thing on him sence, till a spell back. But I'll stick ter 'im this time, like a possum ter a rail. He woan't put eöut no more, ye kin bet high on thet!"

Digitized by Google

"But he has another wife now!"

"Wall, I thort he moight hev; but she'll *put* kind o' sudden, I reckon. What is she—white or nigger?"

"She's a likely quadroon girl. She's almost made a man of him."

"Hi Lordy! then she's right smart. I'm gol-durned ef *I* could!"

"If you have so poor an opinion of him, why do you follow him?"

"Wall, I goes for a 'ooman's hevin' har own. When he put eout, I swore ter gol I'd foller 'im as soon as I got on his trail, ef I hed ter go to h—ll fur it!"

The low vulgarity of the woman disgusted me, and it seemed to have the same effect on the Squire, for he turned his back to her when she made the last remark. Not appearing to notice his manner, she said, after a moment:

"I say, Gin'ral! what 'bout thet stealin' bisness?"

"Bony was taken up a while back, for buying turpentine of the negroes. I reckon he's in jail yet."

"Yas, I heerd uv thet—thet's how I treed 'im. Cunnel Lamsin—nigh on ter me—he seed it in the paper. I know'd 'im by th' Bonaparty. When'll he be mauled?"

"Very soon, I reckon. He was sentenced to fifty lashes a week ago."

"It'll do 'im good; I'd given 'im more'n thet. He war allers up ter dealin' with nigs."

The road, when we started, was in very bad condition, and as we proceeded it grew gradually worse, till, in the vicinity of the runs where we then were, it had become almost impassable. We frequently turned off into the woods and open fields

Digitized by Google

to avoid the worst places, but even there the jolting of the coach was so violent that I momentarily expected our "lady" passenger would roll off into the mud. Seeing that she was in absolute danger, and being also willing to dispense with her refined society, I finally said:

"Would you not prefer an inside seat?"

"Yas, I would; but I han't th' money fur't. The' axed so like durnation fur totein' me in thar, I couldn't stan' it, nohow."

"What fare did she pay, driver?" I asked of the Jehu.

"Half price."

"That's enough for seventy miles over a road like this. Let her get inside."

"Karn't, stranger; 'tan't 'lowed; (d'rot yer dirty hide—you, Jake—g'up!) the old man would raise 'tic'lar (wha 'bout—g'lang, ye lazy critter) music ef I done thet."

"How much more do you want?" I inquired.

"The whole figur (g'up thar, g'lang, ye durnation brute); nary a red less."

"I will see that Dibble finds no fault, and you shall 'moisten up' at the doctor's," said Preston.

"Wall, Squire (d—n yer rotten pictur), ef ye says thet, (whoa—whoa, thar, ye all-fired rackabones—whoa!) it's a trade."

The stage halted, and the woman got inside.

We arrived at Kinston about an hour after noon, and after a meagre meal at "the doctor's" (that gentleman eked out a dull practice among his neighbors by a sharp practice on his guests), again mounted the stage. We had proceeded to within eighteen miles of Newbern, when suddenly, as the Squire and I were lighting our second after-dinner segars,

Digitized by Google

"ker-chunk" went one of the forward wheels, and over went the coach in a twinkling. I saved myself by clinging to the seat, but Preston was not so fortunate. The first I saw of him he was immersed in a pool of water some ten feet distant. Luckily the ground was soft, and he escaped personal injury; but when he rose to his feet, his coat, like Joseph's, was of many colors, a dull clayey-red predominating.

It was fortunate for the clay-eating feminine that her conversation had disgusted us. Had she remained outside, she might have sighed for her "Bonaparty" in the torrid region of which she had spoken.

The other passengers escaped with a few bruises, and after an hour's exercise with rails and saplings, we succeeded in prying the wheels out of the mire. Then the driver discovered that one of the horses had lost its shoes, and insisted on having them replaced before proceeding. We were midway between two "relay houses," and the Jehu decided on taking the shoeless horse back to the station we had passed. As he was unharnessing the animal, I said to him:

"You say there is a blacksmith at each station—why not go to the one ahead? It will save time."

"The boy at Tom's store's run off. Thar an't nary a nig thar to hold the critter's huff."

"Cannot the blacksmith do that himself? I never heard of its taking two men to shoe one horse!"

"Wall, it do, stranger. I reckon ye never done thet sort o' bisness."

"But can't *you* do it?"

"*I* do it! My bisness ar drivin' hosses, not shoein' on 'em. When I takes ter thet I'll let ye know!"

Digitized by Google

He had by that time taken off the harness, and was preparing to mount the animal.

"Come, come, my good fellow, do not go back for that. Go on, and *I'll* hold the horse's feet."

"*Ye* hold 'em! I reckon ye wull! I'd like ter see a man uv yer cloth a-holdin' a critter's fut! Ha! ha!" Then throwing his leg over the horse's bare back, he added: "We doan't come it over trav'lers thet way, in this deestrict—we doan't. We use 'em like folks—we do. Ye can bet yer pile on thet!"

Preston, who had been quietly enjoying the dialogue, as the driver rode away, said to me:

"I knew you wouldn't make anything out of him. Come, let us walk on; a little exercise, after our warm work, will do us good."

Leaving the other passengers to await the motions of the driver, the blacksmith, and the black "huff"-holder, we trudged on through the mud, and in about two hours reached the next station.

The reader will find the spot which bears the dignified cognomen of "Tom's Store," if he looks on the map of North Carolina. It is there destitute of a name, but is plainly designated by the circular character which is applied by geographers to villages. It is situated on a small tributary of the Neuse, and consists of a one-story building about twenty feet wide, and forty feet long, divided into two apartments, and built of pine slabs. One half of it, at the date of my visit, was sparsely occupied with drygoods, groceries, fishhooks, log chains, goose yokes, tin pans, cut nails, and Jews' harps, while the other was densely crowded with logwood, "dog-leg," strychnine, juniper

Digitized by Google

berries, New England rum, and cistern water, all mixed together. The latter region was the more populous neighborhood, and was absolutely packed with thirsty natives, imbibing certain fluids known at the South as "blue ruin," "bust-head," "red-eye," "tangle-foot," "rifle-whiskey," and "devil's dye," at the rate of a "bit" a glass, and of four "bits" for "as much as a man could tote."

I was introduced by the Squire to Tom himself, the illustrious founder of the village. He was a stout, bloated specimen of humanity, with a red, pimpled face, a long grizzly beard, small inflamed eyes, and a nose that might have been mistaken for a peeled beet. His whole appearance showed that he was an *habitué* of the more fashionable quarter of his village (the groggery), and a liberal imbiber of his own compounds. He informed me that he did a "right smart" business; bought drygoods in "York," "sperrets" in 'Hio, and rum in Bostin'; and he added: "Stranger, I never keeps none but th' clar juice, th' raal, genuwine critter, d—d ef I do. Come, take a drink."

I declined, when a bystander, who seemed to know—he could scarcely keep his feet,—overhearing the remark, confirmed it, by saying with a big oath:

"It's so, stranger; Tom do keep th' reg'lar critter, th' clar juice! Thar's no mistake 'bout thet, fur it gits tight itself every cold snap!"

When we arrived, about a hundred men, women, and children were assembled on the cleared plot in front of the store, witnessing a "turkey match." Wishing to avoid the noisy crowd, and being fatigued with our long tramp over the muddy road, my companion and I entered the more reputable portion

Digitized by Google

of the store in quest of a seat. It was nearly deserted. A lazy yellow boy was stretched at full length on the pine counter which kept customers at an honest distance from the rows of half-filled shelves occupying three sides of the room, and on a low bench in front of him sat a woman and two children. These four were the only persons in the apartment. The woman seemed to be not more than twenty-five, and was dressed in a neat calico gown, and had a tidy appearance. She wore a thin woollen shawl, a clean red and yellow turban, white cotton stockings, and coarse untanned shoes. These last were nearly new, and very clumsy, and, like the rest of her costume, were travel-stained and bespattered with mud. She had evidently walked a long distance that morning.

Her figure was slight and graceful, and her face very beautiful. She had long, black, glossy hair, straight, regular features, a rich olive complexion, and large, lustrous eyes, which, as she sat opposite the open door, were fixed on the thick, gloomy woods, with an earnest, almost agonized gaze, as if she were reading in its tangled depths the dark, uncertain future that lay before her. Never shall I forget the expression of her face. Never have I seen its look of keen, intense agony, and its full, perfect, utter despair. One of the children was a little girl of eight years, with a sweet, hopeful expression, a clear rosy skin, and brown, wavy hair; and the other, a little mulatto boy, a few years older. They each held one of the woman's hands, and something peculiar in their attitudes made me look closely at them. A thin piece of iron, called by slave traders a "bracelet," encircled their wrists, and fastened their arms to the woman's! They were slaves!

I entered the cabin a few steps in advance of Preston, who

Digitized by Google

paused in the doorway as he caught sight of the group. The woman did not notice him, but his face turned to a marble white, and his voice trembled with emotion, as he exclaimed:

"My God! Phyllis, is this *you?*"

The woman sprang to her feet, took one step forward, and sank to the floor. Stretching out her shackled arms, bound to the children as they were, she clasped his knees, and cried out:

"Oh Master Robert! dear Master Robert, save me! Oh! save me; for the love of the dear children, save me!"

The little boy and girl caught hold of his skirts, and both, crying hard, turned their faces up to his. The younger said:

"Oh! do, massa! take us 'way from dis man; he bery bad, massa. He whip you' little Rosey 'case she couldn't walk all de way—all de way yere, massa!"

The water gathered in Preston's eyes, as he asked:

"Why did they sell you, Phyllis? Why didn't I know of it?"

"Missus went to you, Master Robert, but you warn't to home. Master had to have the money right off. The trader was thar. Master couldn't wait till you come back. Oh! save me, Master Robert! He's takin' me to Orleans, to Orleans! Do save me! Think of the chil'ren, Master Robert. Oh! think of the chil'ren!" and she loosened her hold of his limbs, and wept as if her very heart was breaking.

Preston's words came thick and broken, his frame shook, he almost groaned, as he said:

"I would to God that I could, Phyllis; but I am in debt—pressed on every side. I could not raise the money to save my soul!"

"Oh my God! what will become of us?" exclaimed the

Digitized by Google

woman. "Think of little Lule, Master Robert! They've taken me 'way from her! Oh! what will become of us, Master Robert? what will become of us?"

Preston stood like a man on whom the sentence of death had fallen. A cold, glassy look came into his eyes, a thick, heavy sweat started from his forehead; his iron limbs seemed giving way under him. Placing my hand on his shoulder, I asked:

"How much is needed, my friend?"

"I don't know," he replied, pressing his hands to his head as if to keep it from bursting. "How much, Phylly?"

"Twelve hundred, Master Robert—they sold us for twelve hundred."

"Well, well, my good woman, don't feel badly. I'll let Master Robert have the money."

The woman stared at me incredulously for a moment; then, while the children came and clung to me as if I were an old friend, she said:

"Oh! bless you, sir! bless you! I will love you, sir! The children will forever love you for it."

A struggle seemed to be going on in Preston's mind. He was silent for some moments; then, in a slow, undecided voice, he said:

"It would not be right; I can't take it, Kirke. I owe you now. I'm in debt elsewhere. A judgment has been got against me. My crops have turned out poorly. I've been to Virginia for money, and can't get a dollar. It would not be honest. I can't take it."

No words can picture the look on the woman's face, as she cried:

Digitized by Google

"Oh! do take it, Master Robert! *Do* take it. I'll work. I'll make it. I can make it *very soon*, Master Robert. Oh! *do* take it!"

"How much is the judgment?" I asked.

"Only six hundred; but old —— has it, and he has no mercy. He'll have the money at once, or sell everything—the negroes—everything!" and he choked down the heavy groan which half escaped his lips.

"Have you no produce at home?"

"About a thousand barrels of rosin. But the river is low; I can't get it down."

"Well, that's worth five hundred dollars where it is. Any cotton?"

"Only eleven bales—low middling."

"That's three hundred more. Consider it ours, and draw at ninety days for the whole, judgment and all."

The woman had risen during this conversation, and stood with her eyes riveted on our faces, as if her eternal destiny hung on our words. When I made the last remark, she staggered toward me and fell, as if dead, at my feet. I brought water from the stream hard by, and we soon restored her to herself. Preston then lifted her from the floor, and placing her tenderly on the bench, said, turning to me:

"You cannot understand how much you have done for me. Words are weak—they cannot tell you. I will pay you out of the next crop. Meanwhile I will re-draw, and keep it afloat."

"Do as you like about that. Where is your owner, Phyllis?"

"Outside, dear master. You'll know him. He's more of us pore creatures with him."

Digitized by Google

"Come, Preston, let's see him at once; we've no time to lose. The stage will be along soon."

"I've no heart for trading now. You manage it, my friend."

"Well, as you say; but you'd better be with me. Come."

"I will, in a moment."

He lingered behind, and, when I left the cabin, was speaking in a low tone to the slave woman. Thinking he would follow in a moment, I went in quest of the trader.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEGRO TRADER.

On the cleared plot in front of the store were assembled, as I have said, about a hundred men, women, and children, witnessing a "turkey match." It was a motley gathering. All classes and colors and ages were there. The young gentleman who boasted his hundred darkies, and the small planter who worked in the field with his five negroes; the "poor trash" who scratched a bare subsistence from a sorry patch of beans and "collards," and the swearing, staggering bully, who did not condescend to do anything; the brawny field hand who had toiled over night to finish his task in time for "de shootin'," and the well-dressed body servant who had roused "young massa oncommon airly" for the same purpose; all, white, black, and yellow—and some neither white, black, nor yellow—were scattered over various parts of the ground, engaged in lounging, playing, drinking, smoking, chatting, swearing, wrangling, and looking on at the turkey match.

A live turkey was tied to an ordinary bean pole, and, when I emerged from the cabin, seven or eight "natives" had entered for "a shot." The payment of a "bit," "cash down," to Tom, who officiated as master of ceremonies, secured a chance of hitting the turkey's head with a rifle bullet at "long

Digitized by Google

distance." Any other "hit" was considered "foul," and passed for nothing. Whoever took the prize, was expected to "treat the crowd." As "the crowd" seemed a thirsty one, it struck me that *turkey* would prove expensive eating to the fortunate shots; but they were oblivious of expense, and in a state of mind that unfitted them for close financial calculations.

Nearly every marksman present had "carried off his poultry," and Tom already had reaped a harvest of dimes from the whiskey drinking. "Why, bless ye," he said to me, "I should be broke, clean done up, ef it warn't fur the drinks. I haint got more'n a bit, or three fips, fur nary fowl. The fust shot allers brings down the bird; ary man on 'em kin hit a turkey's eye at a hundred paces." This was true; and in such schools were trained the unerring marksmen who are now "bringing down" the bravest youth of our country, like fowls at a turkey match.

A disturbance had broken out on a remote part of the ground, and, noticing about twenty negro men and women seated on a log near by, I went in that direction, in hopes of meeting the negro trader. It was a dog fight. Inside an imaginary ring about ten feet in diameter, two dogs were clenched in what seemed a life-and-death struggle. One was holding the other down by the lower jaw, while a man, evidently the owner of the half-vanquished brute, was trying to separate them. Outside this ring about twenty other brutes—men, women, and children—were cheering the combatants, and calling on the meddler to desist. It was strange how the peacemaker managed to stand up against the volleys of oaths showered upon him. He did, however, and persisted in his laudable efforts, till a tall, rawboned, heavy-jawed fellow stepped

Digitized by Google

into the ring, and grasped him by the collar, saying: "Let 'em be — it's a fair fight; d——n yer pictur — let 'em alone."

"Take thet! ye whelp," said the other, planting a heavy blow between the intruder's eyes. Blow followed blow; they clenched; went down; rose up; fought on—at one end of the ring the canines, at the other the fighters; while the rest looked on, shouting, "Let 'er rip! Go in, Wade! Hit 'im agin! Smash his mug! Pluck the grizzly! Hurrah fur Smith! Never say die! Go in agin!" till the blood flowed, and dogs and men rolled over on the ground together.

Disgusted with this exhibition of nineteenth-century civilization, I turned and walked away. As I did so, I noticed, following me at a short distance, a well-dressed man of about thirty-five. He wore a slouched hat, a gray coat and pantaloons, and enormous high-top boots, to one of which was affixed a brass spur. Over his shoulder, holding the two ends in his hand, he carried a strong, flexible whip, silver mounted, and polished like patent leather. He was about six feet high, stoutly built, with a heavy, inexpressive face, and a clear, sharp gray eye. One glance satisfied me that he was the negro trader.

As he approached, he held out his hand in a free, hearty way, saying: "Cunnel, good evenin'."

"Good evenin'," I replied, intentionally adopting his accent; "but yer wrong, stranger; I'm nary cunnel."

"Well, Major, then?"

"No, Gin'ral; not even a corp'ral."

"Then ye're *Squire* ——" and he hesitated for me to fill up the blank.

Digitized by Google

"No; not even Squire ——," I added, laughing. "I've nary title; I'm plain *Mister* Kirke; nothin' else."

"Well, *Mister* Kirke, ye're the fust man I've met in the hull Suthun country who was jest nobody at all; and drot me ef I doan't like ye fur't. Ev'ry d—d little upstart, now-a-days, has a handle ter his name—they all b'long ter the nobility, ha! ha!" and he again brought his hand down upon mine with a concussion that made the woods ring.

"Come," he added, "let's hev a drink."

"Proud ter drink with ye, stranger; but I karn't go Tom's sperrets; it's hard ter take."

"Thet's a fact; but I keeps the raal stuff. Thet's the pizen fur ye," he replied, holding up a small willow flask, and starting for the bar. Entering a cloud of tobacco smoke, and groping our way over groups of drunken chivalry, who lay "loosely around," we approached the counter.

"Har, you lousy sorrel-top," said the trader to the red-faced and red-headed bar tender, "har, give us some mugs."

"Sorrel-top" placed two glasses on the counter, and my new acquaintance proceeded to rinse them thoroughly. They were of a clear grass-green color, and holding one up to the light, the trader said: "Now luk a' them. Them's 'bout as green as the fellers thet drink out on 'em. A man's stumac's got ter be of cast iron ter stand the stuff they sell yere."

"It's better'n you kin 'ford ter drink," exclaimed the bar-tender, in high dudgeon.

"Who spoke ter ye?—take thet!" rejoined the trader, discharging the contents of the glass full in the man's face. The sorrel-crowned worthy bore the indignity silently, evidently deeming discretion the better part of valor

Digitized by Google

"Buy'n ony nigs, Kirke?" said the trader, inserting his arm in mine, and leading me away from the shanty. "I've got a prime lot—*prime!*" and he smacked his lips at the last word, in the manner that is common to professional liquor tasters. He scented a trade afar off, and his organs of taste, sympathizing with his olfactories, gave out that token of satisfaction.

"Well, I doan't know. What ye got?"

"Some o' the likeliest property ye ever seed—men and wimmin. All bought round har; haint ben ter Virginny yit. Come 'long, I'll show ye;" and he proceeded toward the group of chattels. He was becoming altogether too familiar; but I called to mind a favorite maxim of good old Mr. Russell —"Necessity has no law"—and quietly submitted.

The negroes were seated on a fallen pine, and were chained together by the wrists, in gangs of four or five, the outside one having one hand secured by a cord bound about the waist. The men wore woollen hats, and the women neat Madras turbans, and both had thick linsey clothing, warm enough for any weather. Their dusky faces were sleek and oily, and their kinky locks combed as straight as nature would permit. The trader had "rigged them up," as a jockey "rigs up" horses for market.

Pausing before a brawny specimen of the yellow species, he said: "Thar, Kirke, luk o' thar; thar's a boy fur ye—a nig thet kin work; 'tend ten thousand boxes (turpentine) easy. He's the sort. Prime stuff, *thet* (feeling of his arms and thighs); hard—hard as rock—siners like rope. Come o' good stock, he did—the old Devereaux blood (a highly respectable family in those parts); they's the raal quality—none on yer

Digitized by Google

shams and mushrooms, but genuwine 'stockracy—blamed ef they haint. What d'ye say ter him?"

"Well, he moight do, p'raps; but I rather reckon ye've done him up some—'iled his face, greased his wool, and sech like. It's all right, ye knows—onything's far in trade; but ye karn't come it over me, ole feller. I'm up ter sech doin's. I *am*, Mr. ——," and I paused for him to finish the sentence.

"Larkin," he added quickly and good-humoredly; "Jake Larkin, and yours, by ——," and he gave my hand another shake. "Yer one on 'em, I swar, and I own up; I *hev* 'iled 'em a trifle—jest a trifle; but ye kin see through thet. We hev ter do it ter fix the green 'uns, ye knows."

"Yes, I knows—'iled 'em inside and out, haint ye?"

"No, on my soul; only one glass ter day—true as preachin'."

"Boy," I said to the yellow man, "how much whiskey hev ye drunk ter day? Now, tell the truth."

"Nary drop, massa; hed a moufful o' *sperrets*—a berry little moufful; dat's all."

"'Taint 'nough, Larkin! Come, now, doan't be mean with nigs. Give 'em some more—some o' thet tall brandy o' yourn; a good swig. They karn't stand it out yere in the cold without a little warmin' up."

"Well, I'm blamed ef I won't. Har, you, Jim," speaking to a well-dressed darky lounging near; "har, go ter thet red-headed woodpecker, thar at the cabin, and tell him I'll smash his peepers ef he doan't send me some glasses ter onst—d'ye yere? Go."

The gentlemanly darky went, and soon returned with the glass-ware; and meanwhile Larkin directed another well-clad

Digitized by Google

negro man to "fotch the jugs." They were strung across the back of a horse which was tied near, and, uncorking one of them, the trader said: "I allers tote my own pizen. 'Taint right to give even nigs sech hell-fire as they sell round har; it gits a feller's stumac used ter Tophet 'fore the rest on him is 'climated."

"Well, it does," I replied; "it's the devil's own warmin' pan."

Each negro received a fair quantity of the beverage, and seemed the better for it. A little brandy, "for the stomach's sake," is enjoyed by those dusky denizens of the low latitudes.

When they were all supplied, the trader said to me: "Now, what d'ye say, Kirke? What'll ye give fur the boy?"

"Well, I reckon I doan't want no boy now; and I doan't know as I wants ary 'ooman nother; but if ye've got a right likely gal—one thet'll sew, and nuss good—I moight buy har fur a friend o' mine. His wife's hed twins, and he moight use har ter look arter the young 'uns."

"Young or old?"

"Young and sprightly."

"They is high, ye knows; but thar's a gal thet'll suit. Git up, gals;" and a row of five women rose. "No; git up thar, whar we kin see 'ye." They stepped up on the log. "Now, thar's a gal fur ye," he continued, pointing to a clean, tidy mulatto woman, not more than nineteen, with a handsome but meek, sorrow-marked face. "Luk at thet!" and he threw up her dress to her knees, while the poor girl reached down her shackled hands in the vain effort to prevent the indignity. He

Digitized by Google

was about to show off other good points, when I said: "Never mind; I see what she is. Let 'em git down."

They resumed their seats, and he continued: "Thet's jest the gal ye wants, Kirke. Good at nussin', wet or dry. Good at breedin', too; hed two young 'uns a'ready. Ye kin * * * * *." (The rest of this discourse will not bear repeating.)

"No, thank you."

"Well, jest as ye say. She's sound, though; sold fur no fault. Har young massa's ben a-usin' on har—young 'uns are his'n. Old man got pious; couldn't stand sech doin's, no-how—ter home; so he says ter me, 'Jake,' says he, 'take har ter Orleans; she's jest the sort; ye'll make money sellin' har ter some o' them young bloods.' Ha! ha! thet's religion fur ye! I doan't know, Kirke, mebbe ye b'long ter the church, and p'raps ye're one o' the screamin' sort; but onyhow, I say, d—n sech religion as thet. Jake Larkin's a spec'lator, but he wouldn't do a thing like thet; ef he would, d—n him."

(The dealer in negroes never applies the term "trader" to himself; he prefers the softer word, "speculator." The phrase "negro trader," is used only by the rest of the community, who are "holier than he.")

"I doan't b'lieve ye would, Larkin; yer a good feller, at bottom, I reckon."

"Well, Kirke, ye're a trump. Come, hev another drink."

"No; excuse me; karn't stand more'n one horn a day: another'd lay me out flatter'n a stewpan. But ter business. How much fur thet gal—cash down? Come, talk it out."

"Well, at a word—twelve hun'red."

"Too much—bigger'n my pile; couldn't put so much inter

Digitized by Google

one gal, nohow. Wouldn't give thet money fur ary nig in Car'lina."

"Oh, buy me, good massa. Mister Larkin 'll take less'n dat, I reckon; *do* buy me," cried the girl, who had been eying me very closely during the preceding dialogue.

"I would, my good girl, if I could; but you'll not exactly suit my friend."

"Buy har fur yourself, then, Kirke. She'll suit you. She's sound, I tell ye; ye'd make money on har."

"Not much, I reckon," I replied, dryly.

"Why not? She'll breed like a rabbit. * * * * *."

"I wouldn't own her for the whole State. If I had her, I'd free her on the spot!" The cool bestiality of the trader disgusted me, and I forgot myself.

He started back surprised, then quietly remarked: "Ye're a Nuthuner, I swar; no corncracker ever held sech doctrines as them."

"Yes," I replied, dropping the accent which my blunder had rendered useless; "I *am* a Northerner; but I want a nurse, notwithstanding, for a friend."

"Whar d'ye live?" asked the trader, in the same free, good-natured tone as before.

"In New York."

"In York! What! yer not Mr. Kirke, of Randall, Kirke & Co.? But, blamenation, ye *ar!* How them whiskers has altered ye! I *thort* I'd seed ye afore. Haint ye come it over me slick? Tuk in clean—swollered whole. But thar's my hand, Mr. Kirke; I'm right glad ter see ye."

"Where have you met me, my good fellow? I don't remember you."

Digitized by Google

"Down ter Orleans. Seed ye inter Roye, Struthers & Co.'s. The ole man thinks a heap o' you. Ye give 'em a pile o' business, doan't ye?"

"No; not much of our own. They buy cotton for our English correspondents, and negotiate through us; that is all. Roye is a fine old gentleman."

"Yes, he ar; I'm in with him."

"How *in* with him?"

"Why, in this business. We go snacks; I does the buyin', and he finds the rocks. We use a pile—sometimes a hun'red, sometimes two hun'red thousand."

"Is it possible! Then you do a large business?"

"Yes, right smart. I handle 'bout a thousand, big and little, ev'ry year."

"That *is* large. You do not buy and sell them all, yourself, do you?"

"Oh! no; I hardly ever sells. Once in a while I run agin a buyer, *like you*—ha! ha!—and let one drap; but gin'rally I cage 'em; and when I git 'bout a hun'red together, take 'em ter Orleans, and auction 'em off. Thar's no fuss and dicker 'bout thet, ye knows."

"Yes, I know. But how do you manage so large a gang? I should think some would get away."

"No, they doan't. I put the ribands on 'em; and, 'sides, ye see them boys, thar?" pointing to three splendid specimens of property, loitering near; "I've hed them boys nigh on ter ten year, and I haint lost nary nig sence I had 'em. They're cuter and smarter nor I ar, ony day."

"Then you pick the negroes up round the country, and send them to a rendezvous, where you put them in jail till you make up your number?"

Digitized by Google

"Yes; I'm pickin' some up round yere, now, ye see, and takin' 'em ter Goldsboro'. When I've toted 'em down thar, the boys and I'll go up ter Virginny."

"Why don't you send them on by stage? I should think it would hurt them to camp out at this season."

"Hurt 'em! Lord bless ye, fresh air never hurt a nig. They're never so happy as sleepin' on the groun', with nothin' over 'em, and thar heels close ter a light-wood fire."

"But the delicate house-women, and the children—can they bear it?"

"It do come a trifle hard on them, but it doan't last long. I allers takes ter the railroad when I gits a gang together."

"Well, come; I want a woman. Show me all you have."

"Do you mean so, raally, Mr. Kirke? I thort ye wus a comin' it on me; and I swar ye does do the Suthun like a native. I'm blamed ef I didn't s'pose ye b'longed round yere. Ha! ha! How the ole man would larf ter hear it!"

"But I *am* a native, Larkin; born within sight of Bunker Hill."

"Yes, thet kind o' native; and them's the sort, too. They make all-fired smart spec'lators. I knows a dozen on 'em, thet hev made thar pile, and haint older'n I ar, nother."

"Is it possible!—Yankees in this business?"

"Yes, lots on 'em. Some on yer big folks up ter York and Bostin are in it deep; but they go the 'portin' line, gin'rally, and *thet*——d—d ef *I'd* do it, onyhow."

"Well, about the woman. None of these will do; are they all you have?"

"No; I've got one more, but I've sort o' 'lotted har ter a young feller down ter Orleans. He axed me ter git him jest

Digitized by Google

sech a gal. She's 'most white, and brought up tender like; and them kind is high prized, ye knows."

"Yes, I know; but where is she? Let me see her."

"She's in the store;" and, rising, he led the way to the shanty.

When we arrived at the part of the ground where the marksmen were stationed, we found an altercation going on between Tom and a young planter. It appeared that the young man had paid for a shot, and insisted on his body servant taking his place in the lists. To that Tom, and the stout yeomen who had entered for the turkey, objected, on account of the yellow man's station and complexion.

The young gentleman was dressed in the highest style of fashion, and, though not more than nineteen, was evidently a "blood" of "the very first water." The body servant was a good-looking quadroon, and sported an enormous diamond pin and a heavy gold watch-chain. In his sleek beaver hat, and nicely-brushed suit of black broadcloth, he appeared more like a gentleman than any one on the ground.

As we approached, Tom—every pimple on his red face swelling with virtuous indignation—was delivering himself of the following harangue:

"We doan't put ourselfs on a futtin' with darkies, Mr. Gaston. We doan't keer if they does b'long ter kid-gloved 'ristocrats like ye is; they karn't come in har, nohow! Ye'd better go home. Ye orter be in better business then prowlin' round shootin' matches, with yer scented, bedevilled-up buck niggers. Go home, and wash the scent out o' yer cloes. Yer d—d muskmelon" (Tom's word for musk) "makes ye smell jest like hurt skunks; and ye ar skunks, clar through ter the innards. Whew! Clar out, I tell ye!"

Digitized by Google

The young man's face reddened. The blood of the chivalry was rising, and he replied:

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, you thieving scoundrel. If you don't, the next time I catch you trading with my nigs, I'll see you get a hundred lashes; d—d if I don't."

Tom bade him go to a very warm latitude, and denied trading with negroes.

"You lie, you sneaking whelp. You've got the marks on your back now, for dealing with Pritchett's."

Tom returned the lie, when the young man's face grew a trifle redder, and his whip rising in the air, it fell across Tom's nose in a very uncomfortable manner—for Tom. The liquor vender reeled, but, recovering himself in a moment, he aimed a heavy blow at the young gentleman's frontispiece. That "parlor ornament" would have been sadly disfigured, had not the darky caught the stroke on his left arm, and at the same moment planted what the "profession" call a "wiper," just behind Tom's left ear. Tom's private dram shop went down—"caved in"—was "laid out sprawlin';" and two or three minutes elapsed before it got on its legs again. When it did, it frothed at the mouth like a mug of ale with too much head on it.

They were not more than six paces apart when Tom rose. Drawing a double-barrelled pistol from his pocket, he aimed it at the planter. The latter was in readiness for him. His six-shooter was level with Tom's breast, and his hand on the trigger, when, just as he was about to fire, the negro trader coolly stepped before him, and twisted the weapon from his hand. Turning to Tom, Larkin then said: "Now, you clar! Make tracks, or I'll lamm ye like blamenation. Be off, I tell ye!" he added, as Tom showed an unwillingness to move. "A sen-

Digitized by Google

sible man like ye arn't a gwine ter waste good powder on sech a muskrat sort of a thing as this is, is ye? Come, clar!" and placing his hand on Tom's shoulder, he accelerated his rather slow movements toward the groggery. Returning then to the young man, he said:

"And now you, Mr. Gustavus Adolphus Pocahontas Powhatan Gaston, s'pose *you* clar out, too?"

"I shall go when I please—not before," said Mr. Gaston.

"You'll please mighty sudden, then, *I* reckon. A young man o' your edication should be 'bout better business than gittin' inter brawls with low groggery keepers, and 'sultin' decent white folks with your scented-up niggers. Yer a disgrace ter yer good ole father, and them as wus afore him. With yer larnin' and money ye moight be doin' suthin' fur them as is below ye; but yer doin' nothin' but hangin' round bar rooms, gittin' drunk, playin' cards, drivin' fast hosses, and keepin' nigger wimmin. I'm ashamed o' ye. Yer gwine straight ter hell, ye is; and the hull country's gwine thar, too, 'cause it's raisin' a crap of jest sech idle, no-account, blusterin', riproarin' young fools as you is. Now, go home. Make tracks ter onst, or I'll hev thet d—d nigger's neck o' your'n stretched fur strikin' a white man, I will! Ye knows me, and I'll do it, as sure's my name's Jake Larkin."

The young planter listened rather impatiently to this harangue, but said nothing. When it was concluded, he told his servant to bring up the horses; and then, turning to the trader, said:

"Well, Right Reverend Mr. Larkin, you'll please to make yourself scarce around the plantation in future. If you come near it, just remember that we keep *dogs*, and that we use them

Digitized by Google

for chasing—*niggers.*" The last word was emphasized in a way that showed he classed Larkin with the wares he dealt in.

"Yer father, young man, is a honest man, and a gentleman. He knows I'm one, if I *does* trade in niggers. He'll want ter see me when I want ter come."

The negro by this time had brought up the horses. "Good evening, Mr. Larkin," said young Hopeful, as he mounted and rode off.

"Good evenin'," replied the trader, coolly, but respectfully.

"Good evenin', *Mister* Larkin," said the gentleman's gentleman, as he also mounted to ride off. The emphasis on the "Mister" was too much for the trader, and, making one spring toward the darky, he laid his stout whip across his face. The scented ebony roared, and just then his horse, a high-blooded animal, reared, and threw him. When he had gathered himself up, several warm applications of a thick boot were made to the inexpressible part of his person, and, roaring with pain, he made off at a gait faster than that of his runaway horse.

During the affray the occupants of the ground gathered around the belligerents; but as soon as it was over, they went quietly back to "old-sledge," "seven-up," "pitch-and-toss," "chuck-a-luck," and the "turkey match."

As we walked toward the shanty, the trader said: "Thet feller's a fool. What a chance he's throwin' away! He arn't of no more use than a rotten coon skin or a spoilt herrin', he arn't. All on our young bucks is jest like him. The country's goin' ter the devil, shore;" and, with this choice bit of moralizing, he entered the cabin.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

A SLAVE SALE.

THE Squire was pacing to and fro in the upper end of the room, and the woman and children were seated on the low bench near the counter. Phyllis lifted her eyes to my face as I entered, with a hopeful, inquiring expression, but they fell again when the trader said: "Thet's the gal fur ye, Mr. Kirke; the most perfectest gal in seven States; good at onything—washin', ironin', nussin', breedin'; rig'larly fotched up; worth her weight in gold, d—d if she haint." Turning then to Preston, he exclaimed:

"Why, Squire, how ar ye?"

"Very well," replied my friend, coolly.

"How's times?" continued the trader.

"Very well," said Preston, in a tone which showed a decided distaste for conversation.

"Well, glad on it. I heerd ye were hard put. Glad on it, Squire."

The Squire took no further notice of him; and, turning to his property, the trader said:

"Stand up, gal, and let me show what yer made of. Doan't look so down in the mouth, gal; this gentleman's got a friend thet'll keep ye in the style ye's fotched up ter."

Digitized by Google

Phyllis rose, and made a strong effort to appear composed.

"Now, Mr. Kirke, luk at thet rig," said Larkin, seizing her rudely by the arm, and turning her half around; "straight's a rail. Luk at thet ankle and fut—nimble's a squirrel; and healthy! why, ye couldn't sicken har if ye put har ter hoss-petal work."

"Well, never mind; I see what she is. What's your price?"

"But ye haint seed har yit! She's puny like, I knows, but she's solid, *I* reckon; thar haint a pound o' loose stuff on har—it's all muscle. See thar—jest look o' thet," and he stripped the sleeve of her dress to the elbow; "thar's a arm fur ye—whiter'n buttermilk, and harder'n cheese. Feel on't."

The poor woman submitted meekly to this rough handling of her person, but I said, impatiently:

"I tell you, Larkin, I'm satisfied. Name your price. I've no time to lose: the stage will be along in five minutes."

"The stage! Lord bless ye, Mr. Kirke, it's broke down; 'twon't be here fur an hour, I knows. Now luk o' thet," he continued, drawing the poor woman's thin dress tightly across her limbs, while he proceeded, despite my repeated attempts to interrupt him, with his disgusting exhibitions, which it would be disgraceful even to describe. "Ye doan't mind, do ye, gal?" he added, chucking her under the chin in a rude, familiar way, and giving a brutal laugh. Phyllis shrank away from him, but made no reply. She had evidently braced her mind to the ordeal, and was prepared to bear anything, rather than offend him. I determined to stop any further proceeding, and said to him:

Digitized by Google

"I tell you, Larkin, I'm satisfied. I cannot waste my time in this manner. Let's have your price.

"Time, Mr. Kirke! Why, yer time arn't worth nothin' jest now. The stage won't be 'long 'fore dark. Ye haint seed half on har yit. I doan't want ter sell ye a damaged article. I want ter show ye she's sound's a nut—*ye won't pay my price ef I doan't.* Look a thar, now," and with a quick, dexterous movement, he tore open the front of her dress. * * * *

The poor girl, unable to use her hands, bent over nearly double, and strained the children to her breast to hide her shame. A movement at the other end of the room made me look at the Squire. With his jaws set, his hands clenched, and his face on fire, he was striding toward the trader. In a moment he would have been upon him. My own blood boiled, but, knowing that an outbreak would be fatal to our purpose, I planted myself firmly in his way, and said, as I took him by the arm, and held him back by main force:

"Be quiet, Preston; this is my affair."

"Yes, Squire," added the trader, "ye'd better be quiet. Ye'll turn trader yerself, yit. If things is true, ye'll hev ter begin on yer own nigs, mighty sudden."

"If I am brought to that," replied the Squire, with the calm dignity which was natural to him, "I shall treat them like human beings—not like brutes."

"Ye'll show 'em off the best how ye kin; let ye alone fur thet. I know yer whole parson tribe; thar haint nary a honest one among ye."

Preston turned silently away, as if disdaining to waste words on such a subject; and I said to the trader:

"Mr. Larkin, I've told you I've no time to lose. Name your price at once, or I'll not buy the woman at all."

Digitized by Google

"Wall, jest as ye say, Mr. Kirke. But ye see she's a rare 'un—would bring two thousand in Orleans, sure's a gun."

"Pshaw! you know better than that. But name your price."

"What, fur the lot, or the 'ooman alone?"

"Either way. I've no particular use for the children, but I'll buy them, if cheap."

"Oh! *do* buy us," cried the little girl, taking hold of my coat; "do buy us—please do, good massa."

"Shet up, ye young whelp," said the trader, raising his whip. The little thing slunk back affrighted, and began to sob, but said no more.

"Wall, Mr. Kirke, the lot cost me sixteen fifty, hard rocks; and 'twus dirt cheap, 'cause the 'ooman alone'll bring more'n thet. I couldn't hev bought har fur thet, but har owner wus hard up. Ye see, he's Gineral ———, down ter Newbern, one on yer reg'lar 'ristocrats, the raal ole-fashioned sort—keeps big plantation, house in town; fine wines; fine wimmen; fast hosses; and goes it mighty strong. Well, he's allers a trifle under—ev'ry year 'bout two thousand short; and ev'ry year I buy a couple or so of nigs on him ter make it up. Wall, when I gits 'long thar t'other day, he says ter me, says he: 'Lark' (he allers calls me Lark; thet's the name I goes by 'mong my intimate 'quaintance. He's a pertickerler friend o' mine, ye see; he thinks a heap o' me, he does); well, says he, 'Lark, thar's Phylly; I want ye ter take har. She's the likeliest gal in the world—good ole Virginny blood, father one of the raal ole stock. Ye knows she's right—right ev'ry way; prays like a camp meetin', and virtuous ter kill; thar ain't none round har thet's up ter har at thet; tried ter cum round

Digitized by Google

har myself, but couldn't git nigher'n a rod—won't hev but one man, and'll stick ter him like death; jest the sort fur one o' them New Orleans bloods as wants a gal thet'll be true ter 'em. Does ye take, Lark?' says he. 'Well, I does,' says I; 'and I knows jest the feller fur har—one o' yer raal highflyers; rich's a Jew—twenty thousand a year; lives like a prince; got one or two on 'em now; but he says ter me, when I comes off, 'Lark,' says he, 'find me a gal, kinder pale, tidy, hard's a nut, and not bigger'n a cotton bale.' 'Well,' says I, 'I will;' and, Gin'ral, Phylly's the gal! She'll hev good times, live like a queen, hev wines, dresses, hosses, operas, and all them sort o' things; ye knows them ar fellers doan't stand fur trifles.' 'Yes, I knows, Lark,' says the Gin'ral; 'and bein' it's so, ye kin take har; but I wouldn't sell har ter ary nother man livin'—ef I would, d—n me. Ye kin hev har, Lark, but ye must take the young 'uns; she's got two, ye knows, and it hain't Christian-like ter sell 'em apart.' 'D—n the young 'uns, Gin'ral,' says I; 'I karn't do nary a thing with them, What'll one o' them young bloods want o' them? They goes in fur home manufactures.' 'Yes, I knows, Lark,' says he, 'but ye kin sell 'em off thar; ony planter'll buy 'em; they'll pay ter raise. They're likely little gals, ye knows—honest born, white father, and'll make han'some wimmin—han'somer'n thar mother, and'll sell higher when they's grow'd up. Ye'd better take 'em Lark. Ef ye doan't, I'm d—d ef I'll sell ye the mother; fur, ye see, I *must* have the whole vally, now, thet's honest.' 'Wall, Gin'ral,' says I, 'ye allers talks right out, thet's what I likes in ye. What's the price?' 'Wall,' says he, 'bein' it's ye, and ye've a good master in yer eye fur Phylly, I'll say two thousand fur the lot—the gal

Digitized by Google

alone'll fotch twenty-five hun'red down ter Orleans.' 'Whew!' says I, 'Gin'ral, ye've been a takin' suthin'. (But he hedn't; he war soberer than a church clock; 'twarn't more'n 'lev'n, and he's never drunk 'fore evenin'.) 'Wall,' says I, 'karn't think on it, nohow, Gin'ral.' Then he come down ter eighteen; but I counted out sixteen fifty—good rags on the ole State Bank—and I'm blamed ef he didn't take it. I'd no idee he wud; but debt, Mr. Kirke, debt's the devil; but it helps us, 'case, I s'pose (and he laughed his hardened, brutal laugh), we does the devil's own work. But be thet how it may, ef them highflyin' planters didn't run inter it, and hev ter pay up, nigger spec'latin' wouldn't be wuth follerin'. Wall, I took the nigs, and thar they is; and bein' it's ye, Mr. Kirke, and ye're a friend on the ole man, ye shill hev the lot fur a hun'red and fifty more—or the 'ooman alone fur fifteen hun'red; but ary nother white man couldn't toch 'em fur less'n two thousand—ef they could, d—n me."

The stage had not arrived, and I had submitted to this lengthy harangue, because I saw I was more sure to accomplish the purchase by indulging the humor of the trader. The suspense was, no doubt, agony to Phyllis, and Preston manifested decided impatience, but the delay seemed unavoidable. It was difficult for the latter to control himself. He chafed like a chained tiger. At first he paced up and down the farther side of the apartment, then sat down, then rose and paced the room again, and then again sat down, every now and then glaring upon Larkin with a look of savage ferocity that showed the wild beast was rising in him. The trader once in a while looked toward him with a cool unconcern that indicated two things: nerves of iron, and perfect familiarity with such demonstrations

Digitized by Google

Fearing an explosion, I at last stepped up to the Squire, and said, in a low tone: "Let me beg of you to leave the room; *do*—you may spoil all." He made no reply, but did as I requested.

When he had gone, Larkin remarked, in an indifferent way, "The Squire's got the devil in him. He's some when his blood's up—edged tools, dangerous ter handle; he is—I knows him. I'd ruther hev six like Tom on me, ony time, than one like him. But he karn't skeer me. The man doan't breathe thet kin turn Jake Larkin a hair."

"I see he's excited," I replied; "but why is he so interested in this woman?"

"Why? She was fotched up 'long with him—children together. He owned har till he got in the nineholes one day, and sold har ter the Gin'ral. I'd bet a pile the young 'uns ar his'n. He knows har as he do the psa'm book. Ha! ha!" and he chucked Phyllis again under the chin, as he asked, "Doan't he, gal?"

She shrank away from him, but said nothing.

"Doan't be squeamy, gal; out with it; we'll think the more on ye fur't. Arn't the young 'uns his'n? Didn't ye b'long ter the Squire till he got so d—d pious five year ago?"

"Yes, master; I belonged to him. Master Robert was allers pious."

"Yes, I knows; he wus allers preachin' pious. But didn't ye b'long ter him—ye knows what I means—till he got so d—d camp-meetin' pious?"

"Master Robert was allers camp-meetin' pious," replied the woman, looking down, and drawing her thin shawl more closely over her open bosom.

Digitized by Google

"Wall," said Larkin, "ye karn't git nothin' out o' har; but it's so—shore! Ev'ry 'un says so; and what ev'ry 'un says, arn't more'n a mile from the truth. Jest look o' thet little 'un. Doan't ye see the Squire's eyes and forrerd thar?" and, taking the little girl roughly by the arm, he turned her face toward mine. The lower part of her features were like her mother's; but her eyes, hair, and forehead, were Preston's!

"Yes, I see," I said; "but you spoke of *two* little girls; where is the other?"

"Wall, ye see, I bought 'em both, and the Gin'ral guv me a bill o' sale on 'em; but when we come to look arter the young 'un in the mornin', she warn't thar. The Gin'ral's 'ooman—she's a 'ooman fur me—a whole team; she makes him stan' round, *I* reckon—wall, she'd a likin' fur the little 'un, and she swoore she shouldn't be sold. She told me ter my face she'd packed har off whar I couldn't git har, nohow; and she'd raise the town, and hev me driv' out, ef I 'tempted it."

"What did you do then?" I asked.

"Wall, ye knows the Gin'ral's a honerubble man; so, when he seed his 'ooman wus sot thet way, he throw'd in the yaller boy—and he's wuth a hun'red more'n the gal, ony day. His mother took on ter kill, 'case the Gin'ral'd sort o' promised him ter har, and she'd been a savin' up ter buy him. But the Gin'ral's a honerubble man, and he didn't flinch a hair—not a hair. Thet's the sort ter deal with, I say. I stuck fur the little gal, though—'case, ye see, I'd taken a likin' ter har myself—she's the pootiest little thing yé ever seed, she is; but the Gin'ral he said 'twarn't no use, fur his 'ooman would hev har way; and finarly I guv in, and took another bill o' sale. And what d'ye think! I'd no more'n got it inter my pocket, 'fore

Digitized by Google

the Gin'ral's 'ooman pulled out a gold watch, two or three diamond pins, a ring or two, and some wimmin fixin's, and says she, 'See thar, *Mister* Larkin; them's what I got fur the little gal. *I've* sold har—sold har this mornin', and guv the bill o' sale; and ef the Gin'ral doan't sartify it, he woan't git no peace, I reckon. I wus bound ter see one on 'em done right by, I wus.' Wall, I told har she wus ahead o' my time, and I put out kinder sudden, I did. A 'ooman's the devil; I'd ruther trade with twenty men nor one 'ooman, I swar."

When he spoke of her child, the slave woman burst into tears. Her emotion drowned the curiosity which had made me a patient listener to the trader's story, and recalled me to the business in hand. With some twinges of conscience for having kept the wretched girl so long on the rack, I said to him, "Well, Larkin, let's get through with this. What is your lowest price for the lot?"

"P'raps you'd as lief throw out the boy? I'd take off three hun'red fur him."

"Oh! doan't ye leab Ally, massa! buy Ally too, massa! oh! do, good massa!" he cried, with an expression of keen agony such as I had never till then seen in one so young. He was a "likely" little fellow, with a round, good-natured face, and a bright, intelligent eye; and, though I presumed Preston felt no particular interest in him, I thought of his mother, depriving herself of sleep and rest to save up the price of her child, and I said: "No, I have taken a liking to him; I'll take the whole, or none."

"Well, then, seventeen fifty—not a dime less. Thet's only a hun'red profit."

"Will a hundred profit satisfy you?"

Digitized by Google

"Yes, bein' as ye's a friend o' the ole man, and I hain't had 'em only four days."

I sat down on the bench beside the little girl, and taking her small hand in mine, and playing with her fingers in a careless way, said: "Well, I will give you a hundred profit; but, Larkin," and I looked him directly in the eye, and smiled, "you can't intend to come the Yankee over me! I am one of them myself, you know, and understand such things. These people cost you twelve hundred—not a dime more."

"The h—ll they did! P'raps ye mean ter say I lie?" he replied, in an excited tone, his face reddening with anger.

"No, I don't. I merely state a fact, and you know it. So keep cool."

"It's a d—d lie, sir; I doan't keer who says it," he exclaimed, now really excited.

"Come, come, my fine fellow," I said, rising, and facing him; "skip the hard words, and don't get up too much steam; it might damage you, *or your friends.*"

"What d'ye mean? Speak out, Mr. Kirke. Ef ye doan't want ter buy 'em, say so, and hev done with it." This was said in a more moderate tone. He had evidently taken my meaning, and feared he had gone too far.

"I mean simply this; This woman and the children cost you twelve hundred dollars four days ago. Preston wants them—*must* have them—and he will give thirteen hundred for them, and pay you in a year, with interest; that's all."

"Wall, come now, Mr. Kirke, thet's liberal, arn't it! S'pose I doan't take it, what then?"

"Then Roye, Struthers & Co. will stop your supplies, *or I'll stop their's*—that's 'SARTIN,'" and I laughed good-humoredly as I said it.

Digitized by Google

"Wall, ye're one on 'em, Mr. Kirke, thet's a fact;" and then he added, seriously, "but ye karn't mean ter saddle my doin's onter them?"

"Yes, I will; and tell them they have you to thank for it."

"What"—and he struck his forehead with his hand—"what a dangnation fool I wus ter tell ye 'bout them!"

"Of course you were; and a greater one to say you paid sixteen fifty for the property. I'd have given fifteen hundred for them, if you had told the truth. But come, what do you say; are they Preston's, or not?"

"No, I karn't do it; karn't take Preston's note—'tain't wuth a hill o' beans. Give me the money, and it's a trade."

"Preston is cramped, and cannot pay the money now. I'll give you *my* note, if you prefer it."

"Payable in York, interest and exchange?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's done. And now, d—n the nigs. I'll never buy ary nother good-lookin' 'un as long's I live."

"I hope you won't," I replied, laughing.

He then produced a blank note and a bill of sale, and drawing from his pocket a pen and a small ink bottle, said to me: "Thar, Mr. Kirke, ye fill up the note, and I'll make out the bill o' sale. I'm handy at sech doin's."

"Give me the key of these bracelets first. Make out the bill to Preston—Robert Preston, of Jones County."

He handed me the key, and I unlocked the shackles. "Now, Phyllis," I said, "it is over. Go and tell Master Robert."

She rose, threw her arms wildly above her head, and, staggering weakly forward, without saying a word, left the cabin.

Digitized by Google

Yelping and leaping with joy, the yellow boy followed her; but the little girl came to me, and, looking up timidly in my face, said: "Oh! massa, Rosey so glad 'ou got mammy—Rosey *so* glad. Rosey lub 'ou, massa—Rosey lub 'ou a heap." I thought of a little girl I had left at home, and, with a sudden impulse, lifted the child from the floor and kissed her. She put her small arms about my neck, laid her soft cheek against mine, and burst into tears.

I filled out the note, and gave it to the trader; and, with the bill of sale in my hand, was about to go in search of Preston, when he and Phyllis entered the cabin. I handed him the document, and, glancing over it, he placed it in his pocket book.

"Now, Larkin," I said, "this is a wretched business. Give it up; there's too much of the man in you for this sort of thing."

"Wall, p'raps ye're right, Mr. Kirke; but I'm in it, and I karn't git out. But it seems ter me 'tain't no wuss dealin' in 'em, than ownin' 'em."

"I don't know. Is it not a little worse on the man himself? Does it not sort of harden you—blunt your better feelings—to be always buying and selling people that do not want to be bought and sold?"

"Wall, p'raps it do; it's a cussed business, onyhow. But thar's my hand, Mr. Kirke. Ye're a gintleman, I swar, ef ye *hev* come it over me. Ha! ha! How slick you done it! I likes ye the better fur it; and ef Jake Larkin kin ever do ye a good turn, he'll do it. I allers takes ter a man thet's smarter nor I ar, I does;" and he gave my hand another powerful shake.

Digitized by Google

"I thank you, Larkin; and if I can ever serve *you*, it will give me great pleasure to do so."

"I doan't doubt it, Mr. Kirke, I doan't; and I'll call on ye, shore, ef ye kin ever do me ony good. Good-by; ye want ter be with the Squire; good-by;" and he left the cabin.

Which was the worse—that coarse, hardened man, or the institution which had made him what he was?

Many years afterward the trader and I met again; and then he kept his word.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE ROAD.

It was nine o'clock at night, when the stage halted before the door of that purgatory for Southern pilgrims, the "Washington House," Newbern. As we dismounted from the box, Preston said to me:

"You order supper and a room, while I attend to Phyllis and the children. I'll join you presently."

Seeing that our luggage was safely deposited on the piazza, I entered the hotel in quest of the landlord. The "office" was a long, low, dingy apartment, with tobacco-stained floor, blackened ceiling, and greasy, brown walls, ornamented here and there with advertisements of runaway slaves, auction notices of "mules, negroes, and other property," a few dusty maps, and a number of unframed wood-cuts of prominent political characters. Among the latter, Calhoun, in bristling hair, cadaverous face, and high shirt collar, looked "the unkindest cut of all." Behind the bar, which extended across the farther end of the room, was drawn up a whole regiment of glass decanters, and stout black bottles, full of spirit, and ready for active service. A generous wood fire roared and crackled on a broad hearthstone, and in a semicircle around it, in every conceivable attitude, were gathered about twenty

Digitized by Google

planters' sons, village shopkeepers, turpentine farmers, itinerant horse dealers, and cattle drovers. Some had their heels a trifle higher than their heads, some were seated on the knees of others, some were lounging on the arms of chairs, and some were stretched at full length on a pile of trunks near by; but all were too much engaged in smoking, expectorating, and listening to a horse-trading narrative, which one of their number was relating, to heed my entrance.

"Wall, ye see," said the story teller, "Dick come the possum over him—made b'lieve he wus drunk, though he warn't, no more'n I ar; but he tuk durned good keer ter see the ole man get well slewed, he did. Wall, wen the ole feller wus pooty well primed, Dick stuck his arm inter his'n, toted him off ter the stable, and fotched out a ole, spavin'd, wind-galled, used-up, broken-down critter, thet couldn't gwo a rod, 'cept ye got another hoss to haul him; and says he: 'See thar! thar's a perfect paragone o' hoss-flesh; a raal Arab; nimble's a cricket; sunder'n a nut; gentler'n a cooin' dove, and faster'n a tornado! I doan't sell 'im fur nary fault, and ye couldn't buy 'im fur no price, ef I warn't hard put. Come, now, what d'ye say? I'll put 'im ter ye fur one fifty, an' its less'n he cost, it ar!' Wall, the ole man tuk—swollored the critter whole—tuk him down without greasin', he did—ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!" repeated the listening crowd, and "Yah! yah!" echoed three or four well-dressed darkies, who were standing near the doorway. "Sarved 'im right; he'm a mean ole cuss, he am," chimed in one of the latter gentry (who, I saw, was the perfumed ebony who figured at the turkey match), as he added another guffaw, and, swaying his body back and forth, brought his hands down on his thighs with a concussion

Digitized by Google

which sent a thick cloud of tobacco smoke, of his own manufacture, circling to the other side of the room.

When the merriment had somewhat subsided, I stepped toward the assemblage, and inquired if the landlord were present. There was no reply for a few moments; then one of the embryo planters, speaking to a showily-dressed young man near him, said:

"Get up, and 'tend to the stranger. You arn't fit to tote victuals to a nigger."

The young man rose very deliberately, and said:

"Want ter see the keeper, do ye?"

"Yes, sir; I want a room, and supper for two, at once."

"Room, and supper fur two?"

"Yes; a room with a fire and two beds."

"Whar d'ye come from?"

"From Goldsboro'; just in by the stage."

"Oh! stage's in, is it?"

"Yes, sir; the stage is in. You'll oblige me by attending to us at once; we are hungry and tired."

He looked at me for a moment without speaking, then leisurely walked out through the front door. Two or three of the loungers followed, but the young gentleman who had first spoken, rose, and politely tendered me a seat. Thanking him, I took the chair vacated by the bartender, and proceeded to warm my hands and limbs, which were thoroughly chilled by the long ride in the cold air.

"Cold, riding after nightfall, sir," said the young man, who I now observed was the Mr. Gaston whom the trader had so unceremoniously ejected from the shooting ground.

"Yes, sir; it *is* cold riding on the box."

Digitized by Google

"And our rattle-down coaches are so mighty slow. You don't have such fixin's at the North."

"No, sir; but why do you suppose I'm from the North? I've passed for a Southerner to-day."

"Oh! I know you Yankees all to pieces; I've lived among you."

"At college, I suppose?"

"Yes; at Harvard."

"You graduated early."

"No, I didn't graduate, I *left*—left for my health. Ha! ha!" and he broke into a merry fit of laughter, in which several of his companions joined.

"Taken with sudden illness, as you were at the turkey match, to-day?" I inquired good-humoredly, and in a tone that could not give offence.

"Yes; the same disease, I swear. Ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!" echoed his companions.

"The stranger's inter ye, Gus—inter ye a feet! Come, ye must treat," shouted the teller of the horse story.

This last individual was tall, rawboned, and squarely built, with broad, heavy features, and dull, cold, snake-like eyes. His black, unkempt hair, and long, wiry beard, fell round his face like tow round a mop handle; and his coarse linsey clothes, patched in many places, and smeared with tar and tobacco juice, fitted him as they might have fitted a prolonged pair of tongs. The legs of his pantaloons were thrust inside his boots, and he wore a fuzzy woollen hat with battered crown and broad flapping brim. He looked the very picture of an ex-overseer under a cloud, or an itinerant sporting man, anxious for something to turn up.

Digitized by Google

I declined the proffered drink, but the company rose and approached the counter, while the young planter bade the bartender, who had just reëntered, "trot out the consolation."

"Down with the pewter, then, Mr. Gaston," said the liquor vender. "No pay, no drinks, in this yere shanty."

The young man tossed him a half eagle. His companions proceeded to imbibe a variety of compounds, while he poured out nearly a glass full of raw whiskey, and drank it down at a swallow. As he replaced the glass on the counter, a slatternly negro woman thrust her head in at the doorway, saying:

"Dar's a 'ooman heah—a wite 'ooman, dat am 'ticler anxyus fur de honor ob Mister Mulock's 'quaintance. She'm in de sittin' room'."

"Thar's a call for you, Bony," said the young planter to the story teller; "some young woman with designs on your landed possessions—ha! ha!"

Without replying, the other followed the serving woman from the bar room. He was the absconding polygamist for whom the tobacco-chewing female had ventured all the way from Chalk-Level.

"Is supper ready, sir?" I asked of the bartender.

"Supper?—I reckon so. Ye'd better go and see," was the civil reply.

"Where's the dining room?"

"Over thar—'tother side the hall."

Passing out of the room, I met Preston, and we proceeded together to the supper table. When we were seated, I remarked:

"By the way, I have just seen the husband of our stage coach acquaintance. He's a rum-looking customer."

Digitized by Google

"Yes, I suppose he has taken to drinking again. The whipping, and the loss of Phylly, have probably worked on him."

"You don't mean to say *he* is Phylly's husband?"

"Yes; didn't I tell you?"

"No. Two wives under one roof! Well, that's more than most white men can afford."

"That's a fact. It's an awkward business; what had better be done?"

"Done? Why, let him go. You'll be well rid of him. He's a worthless fellow, or nature doesn't write English. I read 'scoundrel' all over his face."

"He *has* a bad nature; but Phylly's influence on him is good, and she loves him."

"*Loves* him! Well, there's no accounting for tastes."

"That's true," replied the Squire; "but we all love those to whom we do good. She married Mulock after nursing him through a long illness, and has tamed him, though it was taming a wolf."

We soon left the table. Preston went into the sitting room, while I resumed my seat by the bar-room fire.

I had nearly finished my evening cigar, when Preston came into the office. Shaking hands with young Gaston and a number of the others, who all greeted him with marked respect, he said to me:

"What shall I do? Mulock's wife will let him off, if I pay her a hundred dollars."

"Pay her a hundred dollars!" I exclaimed.

"Yes; she'll release him to Phyllis for that—give a paper to that effect. What would you do?"

Digitized by Google

The idea was so ludicrous, that, in spite of the Squire's serious manner, I burst into a fit of laughter. Between the mirthful explosions I managed to say:

"Pardon me, Preston; but I never before heard of selling a husband—at so low a price. Ha! ha! Do not buy him; he isn't worth the money." Then, seeing that he appeared hurt, I added: "What does Phyllis say?"

"I haven't told her. She'll feel badly to have him go; but it's not right for me to pay the money. I should pay my debts first."

Mr. Gaston, whose attention had been attracted to our conversation by my rather boisterous merriment, now said, making a strong effort to appear serious:

"Excuse me, Squire; but what is it? Has Mulock two wives; and does one offer to sell out for a hundred dollars?"

"Yes," replied Preston, in a tone which showed a decided disinclination to conversation.

"Buy him, then, Squire; I'll give you twenty-five dollars for the bargain, on the spot—I will, I swear;" and, unable to contain himself longer, he burst into an uproarious fit of merriment, in which the by-sitters joined.

Preston's face darkened, and, in a grave voice, he said:

"Young man, you forget yourself. I am sorry to see you so wanting in respect to others, and—yourself."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Preston," replied Gaston, in an apologetic tone; "I meant no offence, sir—upon my soul, I did not. If Mulock is for sale for a——" here his risibilities again gave way—"for a hundred dollars, I'll buy him, for it's cheap; I swear it's cheap, seeing he's a white man."

Preston, by this time really angered, was about to make a harsh reply, when I interrupted him:

Digitized by Google

"Never mind, my friend; let Mr Gaston buy him—he can afford it. Do it, Gaston; it will be both a capital joke and a good action; do it *at once*."

The glass of raw whiskey had somewhat "elevated" the young planter, and my conscience demurred a little at the advice I gave him; but I recovered my usual self-complacency on reflecting that he would undoubtedly put the money to a much worse use.

Saying "D—d if I won't," Gaston drew forth his purse, and counted out a number of half eagles. Finding he had not enough, he turned to another young planter, and said:

"Here, Bob, I'm short; lend me fifty dollars."

"Bob" produced his wallet, and, without counting them, handed him a roll of bills.

"Now, stranger, come along; I want you to draw up the papers, and witness the trade—ha! ha! Is she in the parlor, Squire?"

"Yes," said Preston, taking the seat I had vacated.

The young man put his arm into mine, and we proceeded to the "sitting room."

Mulock was seated before the fire, gazing intently at the blaze. His wife sat opposite, speaking earnestly to him. Every now and then she wetted a short piece of wood with saliva, and, dipping it into a snuff bottle, mopped her teeth and gums with the savory powder. She was—as her husband might have said—a perfect "paragone" of "poor white" womanhood, with all the accomplishments of her class—smoking, chewing, and snuff dipping.

As we approached, she lifted her eyes, and Gaston said to her·

Digitized by Google

"Are you the lady who has a man for sale—a likely white man?"

"Wall, stranger, I reckon I'm the 'ooman. Thet ar feller's my husband, an' he karn't git off 'cept I git a hundred dollars."

"Will you give a bill of sale, releasing all your right, title, and interest in him to me, if I pay you a hundred dollars?"

"Yes, I wull; ter ye, or ter onybody."

"Wall, now," continued Gaston, imitating her tone, "karn't ye take a trifle less'n thet—eighty, or so?"

"No, stranger; nary dime under thet. I'm gol-durned ef I does."

"Well, Mulock, what do you say? Are you willing to be sold?"

"I hain't willin' ter be laff'd at by ye, nor nobody else," replied Mulock, rising, and turning fiercely on the planter. "I'll larrup the d—d 'ooman onyhow, and ye, too, ef ye say much more."

"Come, Mulock," said the young man, coolly, but firmly, "be civil, or I'll let daylight through you before you're a minute older. I'm disposed to do you a good turn, but you must be civil, by ——."

"Wall, do as ye likes, Gus; onything'll suit me," replied Mulock, resuming his previous position.

"But, d—n you, if I spend a hundred on you, you must go to work like a man, and try to pay it. I wouldn't do it, anyhow, if it warn't for Phylly."

"But Phylly's gone," said Mulock, in a dejected tone; "gone—toted off by thet d—d trader. If I hadn't a ben in the cussed jug, I'd a killed him."

"No, she isn't gone; she's here—Preston's bought her."

Digitized by Google

Mulock sprang to his feet; his dull, cold eye lighted, and, seizing the young man by the arm, he exclaimed:

"Doan't ye lie ter me, Gus; *is* she yere?"

"Yes, so Bob says; he saw her get out of the stage."

Mulock made no reply, but strode toward the door. Gaston said quickly:

"Hold on, Bony; don't vamose just yet. D—d if I'll help you out of this, if you don't promise to work like an honest fellow to pay me."

"I will, Gus; I'll leave off drinkin' ter onst; I'll work day and night, I will."

"Well, my rustic beauty, are you ready to sign a bill of sale?"

"Yas; but I reckon, bein' as ye set so high on Bony, ye kin go a trifle more'n thet—jest the 'spenses down yere?"

"Not another red," said Gaston.

"Wall, he ain't of no account, nohow; I reckon he ain't wuth no more. Count out th' pewter."

I procured writing materials from the bar room, and in a few moments drew up a paper, by which, in consideration of one hundred dollars to her in hand that day paid, Jane Mulock, of Chalk-Level, in the county of Harnet, and State of North Carolina, did sell, assign, transfer, make over, convey, and forever quit claim unto Phyllis Preston, otherwise known as Phyllis Mulock, of the town of Newbern, in the county of Craven, and State aforesaid, all her right, title, and interest in and to the body, soul, wearing apparel, and other possessions, of one Napoleon Bonaparte Mulock, whom the said Jane charged with being her husband; and also all claims or demands she had on him for a support, she binding herself never

Digitized by Google

to institute any suit or suits against him in any court of the State of North Carolina, or of any other State, or of the United States, for the crime of bigamy, or for any other crime, misdemeanor, or abomination committed against herself at any time prior to the date of said instrument. In testimony whereof, she, the said Jane Mulock, did sign the sign of the cross, and affix her seal to a half sheet of dirty paper, whereto Gustavus A. Gaston, and the writer hereof, were witnesses.

Both Mulock and his wife thought the instrument a valid one. He again took Phyllis to his bosom, and Jane, I have been told, married another husband. In view of the latter fact, I have never been able to wholly satisfy my conscience for the part I took in the transaction.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

A SLAVE MOTHER.

WHILE we were at breakfast on the following morning, Preston said to me:

"I think I had better leave Phylly and Rosey here till I can consult with my wife. We have house servants enough, and Phylly can't work in the field. It may be advisable to have her remain in Newbern."

"And what will you do with the yellow boy?"

"Oh! take him with us. There's always something the little fellows can do. We'll call at his mother's, and get him."

We decided to set out for the plantation at once, and Preston ordered a livery wagon to be got in readiness. While we were waiting for it, I walked out upon the piazza. I had not been there long, before "young Joe"—Preston's only son—rode up to the hotel. He was a manly lad, about twelve years of age, and in form, features, and manners, a miniature edition of his father. He had grown amazingly since at my house, two years before, and I did not at once recognize him; but as he caught sight of me, he shouted out in boyish glee, throwing his bridle over the hitching post, and springing to the ground:

"Oh! Mr. Kirke. I'm so glad you've come; mother will be *so* glad to see you. We'll have such a nice time."

Digitized by Google

"Why, Joe, I thought you were at home!"

"Oh! no. I'm here at school; but father says I shall have a vacation while you're here. Why didn't you fetch Frank? You promised you would."

"I know I did, Joe; but his mother wouldn't let him come. She thinks he's too young to travel."

"Pshaw! He's old enough—'most as old as I am. But never mind, Mr. Kirke; we'll have a fine time, hunting and fishing, and going to the races. They're to have a big one over to Trenton next week, and I'm bound to go. It's *so* lucky you've come."

"Lord bless you, Joe! I never was at a race, and never shot a gun in my life. Besides, I can remain only a day or two."

"Oh! yes, you can. Father says you Yorkers are always in a hurry; but you must take it easy now. I'll show you round, and learn you the ropes."

While I was laughing at the enthusiasm of the lad, the wagon drove up, and, Preston soon appearing, we entered it, and drove off. As Joe bounded upon his spirited horse and led the way down the elm-shaded street, I said to his father:

"How that boy rides! He's a perfect Centaur."

"Yes, he *is* a good horseman; he's been trained to it. You know we think manly exercises an essential part of a gentleman's education."

"And you let Joe keep his own horse?"

"Yes; it's awfully expensive; but old Joe raised the colt for the boy, and I couldn't deny him."

We rode on to the outskirts of the town, and stopped before a small, tumble-down shanty, built of rough boards, and

Digitized by Google

roofed with the same material. In the narrow front yard, a large iron pot, supported on two upright poles, was steaming over a light wood fire. The boiling clothes it contained were being stirred by a brawny, coal-black negro woman, with an arm like the Farnese Hercules, and a form as stout as Wouter Van Twiller's. The yellow boy, Ally, was heaping wood on the fire.

"How do you do, aunty?" said Preston, as we drew up at the rickety gate.

"Right smart, massa, right smart," replied the woman; then, turning round and recognizing the Squire, she added: "Oh! massa Preston, am dat 'ou? Oh! I'se so 'joiced 'ou got Ally; I'se *so* 'joiced! De Lord yere my prayer, massa; de Lord yere my prayer. I feel like I die wid joy, de Lord so good ter me. Oh! He'm so good ter me!"

"The Lord is good to all who love Him. He never fails those that trust in Him," said Preston, solemnly.

"No more'n He doan't, massa; no more'n He doan't. De good missus tole me dat jess wen dey toted de pore chile 'way; but I couldn't b'lieve it, massa; I couldn't b'lieve it. It 'peared like I neber'd see 'im agin—neber'd see 'im agin; but I prayed de Lord, massa—I prayed de Lord all de time—all de time dat de chile wus 'way: I hab no sleep, I eat 'most nuffin, an' my heart grow so big, I fought it would clean broke; but lass night, massa, jess wen it 'peared like I couldn't stan' it no more—wen I wus a cryin' an' a groanin' to de Lord wid all my might, den, massa, de Lord He hard me, an' He open de door, an' de little chile run in, an' he put him arms round my neck, an' he telled me I need neber cry no more, 'case de good massa had got him! Oh! it wus too much,

Digitized by Google

massa, fur 'ou's so good—de Lord's so good, massa! Oh! I feel like I should die ob joy." Here she sat down on a rude bench near by, covered her face with her apron, and sobbed like a child. Preston's eyes filled with tears, but, brushing them hastily away, he asked, as if to change the subject:

"Did you say the 'missus' had been down?"

"Yas, massa; de good missus come down jess so soon as she hard Phylly war sold; an' wen she fine Ally war gwine too, she come ter see de ole 'ooman—she did, massa—and she try to comfut har. She say de good Lord would fotch Ally back, an' He hab, massa! Oh! He hab."

"Well, Dinah, what shall we do with Ally? Do you want him to go to the plantation?"

"Oh! yas, massa; I want de chile ter be wid 'ou. I'd *rudder* he'd be wid 'ou, massa; but, massa"—and she spoke timidly, and with hesitation—"'ou knows ole massa promise ter sell Ally ter me—ter sell 'im ter me wen I'd a sabed up 'nuff ter buy 'im. An' will 'ou, massa, will 'ou?"

"Yes, Dinah; of course I will," said Preston.

"Oh! bress 'ou, massa; bress 'ou. It'm so good ob 'ou—*so* good ob 'ou, massa;" and she sobbed harder than before.

"How much have you saved, aunty?"

"A hun'red and firteen dollar, massa; an' dar's some more'n dat massa Blackwell am ter gib fur usin' on it. Massa Blackwell's got it. How much shill I pay fur Ally, massa?"

"Well, I don't know; the trader offered three hundred for him. You may have him for half that."

"How much'm dat, massa?"

"A hundred and fifty dollars."

"He'm wuth more'n dat, massa Preston; ole massa say

Ally wuth two hun'red an' fifty, or three hun'red, ob any folks' money. He'm a likely boy, massa."

"Yes, I know that; I don't mean to undervalue him. I wouldn't sell him to any one else for less than three hundred dollars."

"Oh! tank 'ou, massa; it'm good ob 'ou—bery good ob 'ou, massa;" and again her apron found the way to her eyes.

"Well," said Preston, after a moment's thought, "I think you'd better take him now, aunty. I'm in some trouble, and it's uncertain how things will turn with me; so you'd better take him now."

"But I hain't money 'nuff, now, massa."

"Well, never mind; pay the rest when you can, but don't scrimp yourself as you have, Dinah; I shan't mind if you never pay it." The woman seemed bewildered, but said nothing; she evidently was unaccustomed to Preston's mode of doing business. I mentioned to him that he could not give a conveyance of the negro boy until the judgment against him was cancelled.

"True," he replied; "I didn't think of that. Shall we attend to it now?"

"Yes, the sooner the better; further costs may accumulate if you delay."

Preston told the negro woman to meet him at eleven o'clock, at the store of the person who had charge of her money, and we rode at once to the "Old State Bank." It was previous to banking hours, but as the cashier resided in the building, we soon secured notes in exchange for Preston's draft on me, and in less than an hour had the judgment satisfied, and Ally's free papers properly made out and executed.

Digitized by Google

It was not quite ten o'clock when, as we were leaving the attorney's office, we noticed the slave woman and her son seated on the steps of Mr. Blackwell's store opposite.

"Are you all ready, aunty?" asked Preston.

"Yas, massa, I'se all ready; I'se got de gole all heah," she replied, holding up a small canvas bag; "a hun'red an' twenty-sevin dollar an' firty cents—so massa Blackwell say; I karn't reckon so much as dat, massa."

The woman had on a clean white neckerchief, and a bran new pair of brogans, and had made an effort to spruce up for the interview, but she still wore the tattered red and yellow turban, and the thin Osnaburg gown—clean, but patched in many places, in which she was arrayed when over the wash kettle.

The merchant then came to the door, and invited us in. Preston handed him the papers to examine, and we all entered the store. As the woman laid the gold on the counter, I said to her:

"Aunty, how long have you been in saving this money?"

"Four year, massa. Ole massa wouldn't 'gree ter sell de chile till four year ago."

"And you've hired your time, and earned this by washing and ironing?"

"Yas, sar; I'se had ter pay massa a hun'red and firty dollar ebery year, 'sides twenty fur rent; an' I'se had ter work bery hard, of'en till 'way inter de night; but I wanted to hab de chile FREE, massa."

"And have you had no husband to help you?"

"No, massa; I neber had none; I neber tuk ter de men folka."

Digitized by Google

She was, as I have said, of a coal-black complexion, while Ally's skin was a bright yellow. His father, therefore, must have been a white man.

"You have worked very hard, no doubt, aunty. Are these the best clothes you have?"

"Yas, massa; dese am *all* I'se got."

"Well, here are ten dollars; buy yourself some for the winter."

"Oh! tank 'ou, massa. 'Ou's too good, massa; I tank 'ou bery much; but 'ou'll leff me gib dis ter de Squire, massa, 'on't 'ou? I wants ter pay fur Ally."

"Yes, if he will take it," I replied, for I felt sure he would not.

The merchant had examined the documents, and Preston had counted the money and put it in his pocket, when, handing the papers to Dinah, the Squire said:

"Now, aunty, Ally's free, and I hope he'll grow up a good boy, and worthy of such a mother."

"Oh! he will dat, massa; he'm a good chile; but heah'm ten dollar more, massa—it'm de good gemman's, an' he say I kin gib it ter 'ou fur Ally."

Preston laughed. "I heard what he said. I can't take it, Dinah. You need it for winter clothing. I'll take the risk of what you owe me."

The shopkeeper said:

"Take it, Squire; I'll let Dinah have what she needs from the store; she knows her credit is good with me."

"Well," said Preston, taking the money, "this makes one hundred and thirty-seven dollars and thirty cents. You need not pay any more, Dinah; Ally is yours *now*."

"Oh! am Ally *free*, massa? Am de chile FREE?" she

Digitized by Google

exclaimed, taking him in her arms, and bursting into a hysterical fit of weeping.

Every eye was wet, but no one spoke. At last Dinah said:

"But, massa Preston, I wants 'ou ter take de chile. I wants 'ou ter fotch 'im up. I karn't larn 'im nuffin. I doan't know nuffin, massa. He kin git larnin' wid 'ou."

"But he's all you have. At home he'll be a help and a comfort to you."

"I doan't want no help, massa. He'm FREE now; I doan't want no help no more."

"Well, aunty, I'll take him, and pay you twenty dollars a year, till he's fifteen. He's twelve, now, isn't he?"

"A'most twelve, massa, a'most. But 'ou needn't pay *me* nuffin; jess gib de chile what you likes. And, massa, 'ou'll speak ter Boss Joe 'bout 'im, woan't 'ou? 'Ou'll ax 'im ter see Ally gwoes ter de meetin's, an' larns suffin out ob de books, woan't 'ou, massa? I wants him ter know suffin."

"Yes, I will, Dinah; and I'll keep an eye on him myself."

"Tank 'ou, massa; an' p'raps 'ou'll leff de chile come down ter see 'im ole mammy once'n a while?"

"Yes, I will—once a month. Come, now, Dinah, get into the wagon; we go right by your house."

We stepped into the vehicle, and drove off. When we reached the shanty, the negress got out, and, amid a shower of blessings from her, we rode on to the plantation. For four long years she had worked fifteen hours a day, and denied herself every comfort, to buy her child; and when, at last, she had secured his freedom, she was willing to part from him, that he might "larn suffin out ob de books." *Has not her* wretched race the instincts and feelings that make *us* human?

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLANTATION.

It was a clear, cold, sunshiny day—one of those days so peculiar to the Southern climate, when the blood bounds through every vein as if thrilled by electricity, and a man of lively temperament can scarcely restrain his legs from dancing a "breakdown." We rode rapidly on through a timbered country, where the tall trees grew up close by the roadside, locking their huge arms high in the air, and the long, graceful black moss hung, like mourning drapery, from the great branches. The green pine-tassels carpeted the ground, and breathed a grateful odor around us; and the soft autumn wind swayed the tops of the old trees, and sang a pleasant song over our heads. Every pine bore the scars of the turpentine axe, and here and there, in a patch of woods, a negro gang was gathering the "last dipping;" and now and then, in an open clearing, a poor planter was at work with a few field hands. Occasionally we forded a small stream, where, high up on the bank, was a rude ferry, which served in the rainy season as a miserable substitute for a bridge; and once in a while, far back from the road, we caught sight of an old country seat, whose dingy, unpainted walls, broken-down fences, and dilapidated surroundings, reminded one that shiftless working men, and careless, reckless

Digitized by Google

proprietors are the natural products of slavery. Thus we rode on for several hours, till, turning a slight bend in the road, we suddenly halted before the gateway of my friend's plantation. I had observed, for half a mile, that the woods which lined the wayside were clear of underbrush, the felled trees trimmed, and their branches carefully piled in heaps; and the rails, which in other places straggled about in the road, were doing their appropriate duty on the fences; and I said to Preston:

"I am glad to see you are as good at planting as at preaching."

"Bless you!" he replied, "it isn't me; it's Joe. Joe is acknowledged the best farmer in Jones county."

At the gateway we received a greeting unknown the world over, outside of a Southern plantation. Perched on the fences, swinging on the gate, and hanging in the trees, were a score of young ebonies, of both sexes, who, as we came in sight, set up a chorus of discordant shouts that made the woods ring. Among the noises, I made out: "Gorry! massa'm come." "Dar dey is." "Dat'm de strange gemman." "How's 'ou, massa?" "Glad 'ou's come, massa; 'peared like we'd neber see 'ou no more, massa;" and a multitude of similar exclamations, which told unmistakably the kind of discipline to which they were accustomed. The young chattels are infallible plantation barometers—they indicate the true state of the weather. One may never see among the older slaves of a cruel master any but pleasant faces, for they know the penalty of surliness before a stranger; but the little darkies cannot be restrained. They will slink away into by-corners or scamper out of sight whenever their owner appears, if he does not treat them kindly.

Digitized by Google

"Massa's well. Are you all well?"

"Yes, massa, we's right smart; an' all on we's good little nigs eber sence 'ou's 'way."

"I'm glad to hear it. Now scamper to the house, and tell 'missus' we're coming."

"Missus knows 'ou's comin', massa; massa Joe am dar; missus knows 'ou's comin'."

A short drive throgh a narrow winding avenue, strewn with leaves, and shaded with the long branches of the pine, the oak, and the holly, brought us to the mansion, which stood on a gentle mound in the midst of a green lawn, sloping down to a small lake. It had once been a square, box-like structure; but Preston had so transformed it, that, but for its rustic surroundings, and the thick groups of giant evergreens which clustered at its sides, it might have been taken for a suburban villa. Projecting eaves, large dormers, which sprang out from the roof-line and rested on a broad porch and balcony, a rustic *porte cochere*, and here and there a vine-covered bay or oriole window, broke up the regularity of its outline, and proclaimed its designer a true poet—and poetry, nowadays, is more often written on the walls of country houses, than in the corners of country newspapers.

Excepting the field hands, nearly all of the "family" had gathered to witness our arrival; but there was no shouting or noisy demonstration. After he had greeted Mrs. Preston and his two little daughters—his twin roses, as he called them—my host turned to the assembled negroes, and gave each one his hand and a kind word. The hearty "Lord bress 'ou, good massa!" and "Glad 'ou's come, massa," which broke from all of them, would have gladdened the heart of even the bitterest

Digitized by Google

opponent of the peculiar institution. One old woman, whose head was white as snow, and whose bent form showed great age, sat on a lower step of the porch, surrounded by a cluster of children. Her mistress raised her to her feet as Preston approached; and, throwing her trembling arms around his neck, she sobbed out:

"Oh! massa Robert, ole nussy am happy now; she'll neber leff 'ou gwo 'way agin."

Mrs. Preston shortly turned to lead the way into the house. As she did so, I noticed peeping from out the folds of her dress, where she had shyly hid away, a younger child, of strange and wonderful beauty. She had not, like the others, the fair complexion and pure Grecian features of her mother. Her skin was dark, and her hair, which fell in glossy curls over her neck, was a rich golden brown. Her cheeks seemed two rose leaves thinly sprinkled with snow; her eyes, coals which held a smouldering flame. Her face was one of those caught now and then by the old painters—a thing dreamed of, but seldom seen: the pure expression of an ideal loveliness which is not of the earth. I reached out my hands to her, and said:

"Come here, my little one. This is one I have not seen, Mrs. Preston."

"No, sir; we have never taken her North; she is too young. Go to the gentleman, my pet."

The child came timidly to me, and suffered me to lift her in my arms.

"And what is your name, my little one?"

"Selly, sar," she replied, with the soft, mellow accent which the planter's children acquire from the negroes.

Digitized by Google

"What an odd name!" I remarked.

"Yes, sir, it *is* singular. Her full name is Selma," replied her mother.

"What! who have we here?" exclaimed Preston, as he turned away from the negroes, and stepped up on the piazza.

"Why, it's Selly, Robert. Don't you know your own child?"

Preston took the little girl in his arms, and said, with some feeling:

"It's like you, Lucy. No man ever had a wife like mine, Kirke."

"No one but Mr. Kirke himself, you mean, Robert," replied the lady, smiling, and then adding:

"Selly has been in Newbern for a time. Mr. Preston did not expect to find her at home."

We entered the house, and, taking seats in the drawing room, awaited dinner. We had not been there long before "Master Joe" burst into the apartment, exclaiming:

"Come, Mr. Kirke, Joe is outside; he wants to see you. Come."

"Tell Joe to wait. Don't disturb Mr. Kirke now," said his father.

"Oh! no, Preston; let me see him at once;" and, rising, I followed the lad from the room.

Joe was a dark-colored mulatto man, about fifty years of age. He was dressed in a suit of "butternut homespun," and held in his hand the ordinary slouched hat worn by the "natives." His hair—the short, crispy wool of the African—was sprinkled with gray, and he had the thick lips and broad, heavy features of his race. Nearly six feet high, he was

Digitized by Google

stoutly and compactly built, and, but for a disproportion in the size of his legs, one of which was smaller and two or three inches shorter than the other, might have rated as a "prime field hand." But a high, well-developed forehead, and a clear, intelligent eye, together with a certain self-possessed manner, indicated that he was more than an ordinary negro.

"Here, Joe; here's Mr. Kirke. Make your best bow, old fellow," shouted the lad, as he sprang out upon the piazza. Joe, making the requisite bow, said:

"I'se bery glad ter see you, Mr. Kirke."

"I'm very glad to see you, Joseph. I feel well acquainted with you," I replied, cordially.

"I feels well 'quainted wid *you*, sar. I'se wanted ter see you bery much, Mr. Kirke. You'll 'scuse my 'sturbin' you; but de boy"—and he laid his hand on the lad's head—"'sisted on my comin' ter onst."

Before I could reply, his master came out of the house.

"Welcome home, massa Robert," said the black man, to whom Preston gave his hand, and who then added, in a quick, anxious tone: "What luck in Virginny? Did you do it, massa Robert?"

"No," said Preston; "I couldn't get a dollar—not a dollar, Joe."

"I feared dat—I feared dat, massa Robert. Nobody keer nuffin' fur you but ole Joe—nobody but ole Joe, massa Robert!" His eyes moistened, and he spoke in an inexpressibly tender tone—the tone of a mother when speaking to her child.

"Nobody but Mr. Kirke, Joe. He has paid the judgment!"

"Bress you, Mr. Kirke! de Lord bress you, sar. But

Digitized by Google

dar's more, you knows, massa Robert. You tole Mr. Kirke 'bout dem?"

"No, Joe. I should have done it; but I couldn't."

"P'raps Mr. Kirke wouldn't hab paid dat, if he'd a know'd de whole!" said Joe, in a hesitating tone.

"Undoubtedly I would, Joe. It's no great matter, I'm sure," I replied.

"Well, Joe, never mind this now. We'll talk affairs all over with Mr. Kirke before he goes," said Preston.

"Dat's right, massa Robert; gemman like Mr. Kirke knows 'bout dese tings better'n you nor me."

Preston nodded assent, and we reëntered the mansion

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

PLANTATION MANAGEMENT.

AFTER dinner, we rode over my friend's plantation. It contained about twelve hundred acres, mainly covered with forest trees, but with here and there an isolated patch of cleared land devoted to corn and cotton. A small tributary of the Trent formed its northern boundary, and bordering the little stream was a tract of three hundred acres of low, swampy ground, heavily timbered with cypress and juniper. Tall old pines, denuded of bark for one third of their height, and their white faces bearded with long, shining flakes of "scrape turpentine," crowned the uplands; and scattered among them, about a hundred well-clad, "well-kept" negro men and women were shouting pleasantly to one another, or singing merrily some simple song of "Ole Car'lina," as with the long scrapers they peeled the glistening scales from the scarified trees, or, gathering them in their aprons, "dumped" them into the rude barrels prepared for their reception. Preston had a kind word for each one as we passed—a pleasant inquiry about an infirm mother or a sick child, or some encouraging comment on their cheerful work; and many were the hearty blessings they showered upon "good massa," and many their good-natured exclamations over "de strange gemman dat sell massa's truck."

Digitized by Google

"He'm de kine, 'ou gals," shouted an old darky, bent nearly double with age, who, leaning against one of the barrels, was "packing down" the flakes as they were emptied from the aprons of the women: "He'm de kine, I tell by him eye; de rocks doan't grow fass ter dat gemman's pocket!"

"Well, they don't, uncle," I replied, tossing him a half-dollar piece, and throwing a handful of smaller coin among the women. A general scramble followed, in which the old fellow nimbly joined, shouting out between his boisterous explosions of merriment:

"Dis am de sort, massa; dis am manna rainin' in de wilderness—de Lord's chil'ren lub dis kine; it'm good ter take, massa, good ter take."

"Good as black jack, eh, uncle?" I inquired, laughing, for I saw certain lines about his shrunken mouth, and underneath his sunken eyes, which told plainly he was rather too familiar with that delicious compound of strychnine and whiskey.

"Yas, massa, good as black Jack; dat's my name, massa, dat's my name—yah! yah!" and he turned his face, wet with merry tears, and distended in an uncommonly broad grin, up to mine. In a moment, however, his eye caught Preston's. His broad visage collapsed, his distended mouth shrank to a very diminutive opening, and his twinkling eyes assumed a peculiarly stolid expression, as he added, in a deprecatory tone:

"No, massa Robert, I doan't mean black jack—I doan't mean dat; 'ou knows I doan't keer fur him; 'ou knows I doan't knows him no more, massa Robert."

"I am glad you don't know him," replied Preston, playing on his name. "He's a hardened old sinner. But you know

Digitized by Google

better than to ask presents of strangers. Give it back to the gentleman at once."

An indescribable expression stole over the old negro's visage as he thrust his hand through his thin, frosty wool, looked pleadingly up in his master's face, and, seeing no signs of relenting there, slowly and reluctantly opened his palm, and tendered me the money.

"No, no, Preston, let him keep it; it won't do him any harm," I said.

"No more'n it woan't, good massa—not a morsel ob harm," exclaimed the darky, his small eyes twinkling again with pleasurable anticipation, and his broad face widening into its accustomed grin; "I woan't take nary drop, massa Robert, nary drop."

"Well," said his master, "you can keep it, if you'll promise not to drink it up to-morrow. So much whiskey would spoil your prayer at the meeting."

"So it 'ould, massa Robert—so much as dat; but Jack allers prays de stronger fur a little, massa Robert—jess a little; it sort o' 'pears ter warm up de ole man's sperrets, and ter fotch all de 'votion right inter him froat."

"I suppose it does—all the devotion you ever feel. You're past praying for, I fear, Jack," replied Preston, good-naturedly, turning his horse to go.

"Not pass prayin' fur 'ou, massa Robert, not pass dat; an' ole Jack neber will be, nudder—not so long as he kin holler loud 'nuff fur de Lord ter yere. 'Ou may 'pend on dat, massa Robert, 'ou may 'pend on dat."

As we rode away, I asked Preston if the old black led the services at the negro meetings.

Digitized by Google

"Yes, I am obliged to let him. He was formerly the plantation preacher, and, with all his faults, the blacks are much attached to him. A small rebellion broke out among them, five years ago, when I displaced him, and put Joe into the pulpit. I compromised the difficulty by agreeing that Jack should lead in prayer every Sunday morning. They think he has a gift that way, and *you* would conclude the day of Pentecost had come, if you should hear him when he is about half-seas-over."

"Then he does pray better for a little whiskey?"

"Yes; a mug of 'black jack' helps him amazingly."

After a two hours' circuit of the plantation, we halted in the vicinity of the distilleries, which stood huddled together on the bank of the little stream of which I have spoken. There were three of them, each of thirty barrels' capacity—an enormous size—and they were neatly set in brick, and enclosed in a substantial framed structure, which was weatherboarded, and coated with paint of a dark brown color. Near the only one then in operation were several large heaps of flake turpentine, three or four hundred barrels of rosin, and a vast quantity of the same material scattered loosely about and mixed with broken staves, worn-out strainers, and the *debris* of the rosin bins. Pointing to the confused mass, I said to my host:

"I've half a mind to turn missionary. I feel a sort of call to preach to you Southern heathen."

"I wish you would," he rejoined; "you'd give me a chance to laugh at your sermons, as you have laughed at mine."

"No, you wouldn't laugh. I'd make you *feel* way down in your pocket. I'd have but one sermon and one text, and

Digitized by Google

that would be: 'Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost.' You Southern nabobs do nothing but waste. You waste enough in one day, to feed the whole North for a week. It's a sin—the unpardonable sin—for you know better."

"Well, it *is* wrong; but how can we help it? We can't make the negroes anything but what they are—shiftless, and careless of everything but their own ease."

"I don't know about that. I think such a man as Joe ought to be able to manage them."

"Joe! Well, he can't—he's all drive. And negroes are human beings; they should be treated kindly."

We had approached the front of the still, and were fastening our horses to the trunk of a tree, when we heard loud voices issuing from the other side of the enclosure.

"Here'm what I owes you. Now pack off ter onst, and don't neber show your face on dis plantation no more," said a voice, which I at once recognized as that of "boss Joe."

"I shan't pack off till I'm ready, you d—d black nigger. I've been bossed 'bout by ye long 'nuff. Clar out, and 'tend ter yer own 'fairs," rejoined another voice, which had the tone of a white man's.

"I reckon *dis* am my 'fair, an' I shan't leff you git drunk, and burn up no more white rosin yere; so take yerself off. Ef you doan't, I'll make you blacker nor I is."

"Put yer hand on me, and I'll take the law on ye, *shore*," returned the white man.

"Pshaw, you drunken fool! does you s'pose dese darkies 'ould tell on me? Ef dey 'ould, dar word ain't 'lowed in de law; so you trabble. I doan't keer ter handle you, but I shill, ef you don't leab widin five minutes."

Digitized by Google

What might have followed will not go down in history, for just then Preston and I, emerging from around the corner of the building, appeared in view of the belligerents. The native—a fair specimen of the class of poor whites—stood in a defiant attitude before the still-fire, while Joe was seated on a turpentine barrel near, quietly noting the time by a large silver watch which he held in his hand. He kept on counting the minutes, and gave no heed to his master's approach, till Preston said:

"Joe, what's to pay?"

"Nuffin', massa Robert, 'cept I'se 'scharged dis man, an' he say he won't gwo."

"Do as Joseph bids you," said Preston, turning to the white man; "take your pay, and go at once."

The man stammered out a few words with a cringing air, but the planter cut him short, with:

"I want no explanations. If you can't satisfy Joseph, you can't satisfy me."

The native then leisurely took down a ragged coat that hung from one of the timbers, counted over a small roll of bank notes which Joe gave him, and meekly left the still-house.

Joe and his master devoted the next half hour to piloting me over the distilleries. I commented rather freely on the sad waste of valuable produce which was scattered about, and on the bad economy of keeping three "stills" to do the work of one.

"It might have done years ago," I remarked, "before your trees ran to 'scrape,' and when they yielded enough 'dip' to keep all the stills busy; but now they are eating you up.

Digitized by Google

You have fully four thousand dollars idle here. Sell them, Preston—that amount would help you out of debt."

"Dat's what I tells massa Robert, Mr. Kirke; but he sort o' clings ter ole tings, sar," said Joe, in the free, familiar tone usual with him.

"But *you* do just as badly, Joe," I replied. "You let these darkies waste more than they eat, and you keep four here to do the work of three. You are no better than your master."

"Only haff so good, Mr. Kirke," rejoined the black, showing a set of teeth which a dentist might have used for a door plate; "only *haff* so good, 'case I'se only haff white. But, ef massa Robert 'ould leff me handle de whip, I'd show him suffin'! I reckon de int'rest 'ouldn't be ahind den."

"Why! don't you let Joe whip the negroes?" I asked Preston.

"No, not now; I did, till some years ago, when he almost killed one of them, and came near getting me into serious trouble. He could manage them well enough without whiping, if he'd curb his impetuous temper a little."

"But I does curb it, massa Robert, and it ain't ob no use. Dey knows I *can't* whip 'em, an' dey don't keer fur de starvin', or de tyin' up, or de talkin' to in de meetin'. Dey don't mind fur nuffin' but de whip, an' a little ex'cise wid dat does a nigger good when he'm right down 'fractory. An' you's 'lowed, massa Robert, dat I warn't so much ter blame in dat 'fair ob Black Cale."

"Well, perhaps you weren't. It's a good story, Kirke; did I ever tell it to you?"

"No; I'd be glad to hear it."

Digitized by Google

"Come, Joe," said his master, "you can tell it better than I. You know it by heart."

"Well, massa, ef you says so," replied Joe; and we seated ourselves on some rosin barrels, while the black proceeded to give the following illustration of the working of free and slave institutions:

"Well, you sees, Mr. Kirke, de darky's name wus Black Cale, an' he wus a raised up 'long wid me by de ole gemman—dat am massa Robert's gran'fer. He wus allers a hard-bitted, 'fractory darky, but he wus smart, awful smart, an' 'ould do a heap ob wuck when a minded to; but he wusn't a minded to bery of'en, an' ole master use to hab ter flog him—flog him bery hard. Well, finarly, de ole gemman he grow'd tired ob doin' so much ob dat, an' he call Cale ter him one day, an' he say:

"'Cale, you'se a likely nigger, an' I *don't* like ter flog you so much. Now, I leff you hire you' time, an' gwo down ter Newbern, an' shirk fur you'seff.'

"Ole massa know'd Cale wus habin' a bad 'fect on de oder darkies, an' he 'lowed 'twould be cheap leffin' him gwo, ef he didn't get a picayune fur him. Well, Cale, he took ter dat ter onst, an' he 'greed to gib ole massa one fifty a year fur his time; an' so he put off ter Newbern. Ebery ting gwo on right smart till de ole gemman die. Cale, he wuck hard, pay massa ebery year, an' sabe up quite a heap. Well, ole master die widout a will, an' all de property gwo ter de two sons; dat am massa James an' massa Thomas—he war massa Robert's fader. Now, massa James he neber lib'd on de plantation, so he sold all his haff ob de nigs to massa Thomas, an' put all de 'vails inter his bisness down dar ter Mobile, whar

Digitized by Google

he am now, doin' a heap in de cotton way. But he didn't sell his haff ob Cale, 'case massa Thomas 'ouldn't buy him, nohow. Well, dey owned Cale tugedder fur a spell, an' Cale he wuck on right smart, till one day massa James come home, an' he tell massa Thomas dat on de way he'd a stopped at Newbern, an' sole his haff ob Cale ter Cale heseff, fur five hundred dollar, an' giben him de free papers. Well, den Cale he want ter buy de oder haff ob heseff ob massa Thomas, an' massa Thomas he offer ter take de same money; but Cale say de oder haff not wuth so much as de fust, an' dat he 'ouldn't gib only two fifty."

"Not worth so much! why not?" I inquired.

"Why, Cale say 'case he could do what he like wid de free haff, an' he reckoned he shouldn't be quite so 'sponsible, den, fur de slave haff," and here Joe broke into a fit of laughter, in which Preston joined.

"Well, massa Thomas an' Cale couldn't 'gree 'bout de buyin', but Cale promise ter gib seventy-five dollar a yar fur de use ob massa's haff, an' he gwo off agin ter Newbern. Den de time gwo by fur a year or two, but massa neber git nary dime out ob Cale fur his haff. Cale 'ould say dat only haff ob him wus free, an' de oder haff wusn't 'sponsible, an' couldn't pay its debts, nohow. Finarly, massa, seein' he couldn't git nuffin' out ob Cale, only offers ob two fifty fur de oder haff—an' *dat* he 'ouldn't take, nohow—send me down ter Newbern ter sort o' mediate 'tween Cale an' he. Well, I coax Cale ter 'gree ter wuck one monfh fur heseff, an' de oder monfh fur massa, an' I come home; but it warn't ob no use; Cale would wuck, but massa neber seed a fip ob de pay. Finarly, af'er he'd a gone on dat way 'bout ten yar, stowin'

Digitized by Google

'way what he 'arned whar nobody could fine it, an' allers off'rin' two fifty fur de oder haff ob heseff, massa Thomas he die, an' massa Robert he come ter lib on de plantation. Den massa Robert he ax me what he should do wid Cale, an' I tole him to take de two fifty, an' leff him gwo. But he say 'no;' dat he 'ouldn't sell him fur dat, nohow." And here the black looked shyly at his master, and a roguish twinkle came into his eyes. "Well, den, I tole massa Robert dat I tought I could fix Cale, ef he'd leff me manage him jess as I likes. He 'gree ter dat, an' I gwoes down ter Newbern, an' makes Cale come home, an' den I say ter him: 'Now, Cale, you stay yere, an' gwo ter wuck. Ebery monfh you wuck fur me, an' ebery oder monfh you wuck fur you'seff; an' when you wuck fur you'seff, I pay you so much fur ebery barr'l ob dip, an' so much fur ebery barr'l ob scrape, an' so much fur ebery day when you wuck roun'; an' I makes you pay so much fur what you lib on.' Well, Cale, he 'gree ter dat. He wuck de fust monfh fur heseff, an' he *did* wuck—he done twice so much as any hand on de plantation; but de next monfh, when he wuck fur *me*, he don't do nuffin' but lay roun', an' git drunk. I stood dat till de monfh wus up—fur I neber did take ter whippin' de nigs, an' massa Robert know dat—an' den, when Cale wus clean sober, I tied him up ter gib him a floggin'. Well, when he wus a stripped, an' I wus jess gwine ter lay on de lashes, Cale says ter me, says he: 'Look a yere, 'ou Joe; 'ou may whip massa's haff ob dis nig jess so long as 'ou likes; but ef 'ou put de lash onter *my* haff, I'll take de law on 'ou. I will, shore.' Dat sot me a tinkin'; fur de fac' wus, I'd nary right ter flog *his* haff; but den it 'curred ter me dat none but darkies wus roun', an' so

Digitized by Google

I tought I had him, *shore*. Well, I puts on de lashes, an' he keeps a tellin' me he'd hab de law on me, which make me sort ob 'zasparated, till I put 'em on right smart; an' at lass he gib in. Well, when I'd a got him a feelin' 'bout right, an' wus only jess puttin' on de lass blows, ter finish up makin' a decent nigger ob him, massa Robert he come up; and when he seed de blood a runnin' down his back, he say Cale had been whipped 'bout 'nuff, an' I must stop. Cale turned up missin' dat night, an' got off ter Newbern; an', shore 'nuff, de next evenin', 'long 'bout dark, de sherrif he rode up ter de house wid a writ fur massa Robert fur habin' made 'salt an' batt'ry on one collud man, called Caleb Preston; an' he pulled out a suspeny dat make massa Robert witness agin heseff—ha! ha! You sees, Cale wus smart; he know'd massa Robert b'long ter de Baptist meetin', an' wouldn't lie fur all de niggers in Jones county; so he had him dar—ha! ha!"

Here Joe for some minutes was unable to continue the narrative. It was contagious. I laughed till my sides were sore, and Preston enjoyed the story quite as much as I did.

"Well, what was the end of it?" I asked.

"Only, massa Robert hed to be toted off ter Newbern dat night, git bail, or sleep in de jail, an' de next mornin', af'er de nig hed a hed ten yars' use ob heseff fur nuffin', massa Robert hed to do what *he'd* a said, an' his fader afore him hed said, dey neber would do—dat is, take two fifty fur de oder haff ob Cale—ha! ha! De next time I gwoes ter Newbern I hunt Cale up, an' I tell him he must study fur de law, shore; an' dat ef he done it, I know'd massa Robert would pay de 'spences, out ob lub ter de country."

The negroes who were attending the still had dropped their

work to listen to Joe's story, and at its close guffawed in a chorus that made the woods ring. Hearing it, Joe sprang to his feet, shouting out: "Yere! 'bout you' wuck, dar. Leff me kotch you eavesdroppin' on gemmen agin, an' I'll gib you what I gabe Cale. 'Bout you' wuck, I say." They turned nimbly to their tasks, and Joe resumed his seat.

"I see the moral of that story, Preston," I said, when the negro had concluded.

"What is it?"

"That a darky may be as smart as a white man. Cale outwitted you."

"Well, he did," he replied, laughing; "but that isn't the moral: it is, that flogging never accomplishes its object."

"I'm not so sure of that. Joe had brought Cale to terms —'made a decent nigger on him'—when you, unluckily, interfered."

"It ain't so much de floggin' on em', Mr. Kirke," said Joe, "as dar knowin' dat you *will* do it, ef dey desarve it. Dar ain't a darky on de plantation dat don't know massa Robert an' de good missus 'ould rader be flogged demselves dan flog dem; an' dat wucks bad, Mr. Kirke, sorry bad;" and the negro shook his head with a grave, thoughtful air.

"Tell me, Preston," I said, after a slight pause, "how is it that your neighbor Dawsey, with only seventy-five negroes, sends us more produce than you do, with a hundred and fifty?"

"Simply because he treats his hands like brutes, while I treat mine like men."

"I hope you'll take no offence," I replied, "but it appears to me there must be some other reason. He has only *half* your number."

Digitized by Google

"Well, I will tell you how he and I manage, and you can judge for yourself. Dawsey has seventy-five slaves: forty child-bearing women, twenty men, and fifteen children under five years. The sixty adults are all prime hands. They are given daily tasks, which they cannot possibly do in less than fifteen hours, leaving them only nine hours out of the twenty-four for eating, sleeping, feeding their children, and the waking rest necessary to working people. He never whips them on a week day, because it wastes working time, but makes Sunday a general flogging season. He has two women where he has one man, and each woman is expected to bear a child every second year. If she doesn't, she is sold. They are made to work in the field till the labor pains are on them, and are allowed only two weeks' rest after confinement. Three of them have borne children in the woods, this season. He keeps only one nurse for the fifteen children; and as soon as each child is five years old—the age at whch it can be legally sold away from its mother—it is disposed of to the traders. In addition, three of these women are his mistresses, and they must have children as fast as the others. He serves their children like the rest; that is, rears them to the age of five, and then sells them, as he would so many hogs."

"My God!" I exclaimed; "he's a monster."

"There are different opinions about that. Dawsey passes for a jovial, good fellow; keeps open house for his friends; spends money freely at the elections, and, two years ago, 'got religion' at the camp meeting. He merely regards his slaves as chattels, and manages his plantation in perhaps the only way that is profitable in an old section of country like this."

Digitized by Google

"And how is it with you? How do you manage?" I asked.

"Leff *me* tell, massa Robert," said the black. "I knows all de 'ticulars 'bout dat."

"Go on," said Preston, laughing.

"We hab," continued the black, "countin' me in, a hundred an' fifty-one darkies, all in fam'lies—faders, mudders, chil'ren, an' some on 'em gran'faders an' gran'mudders; 'most all born on de plantation, an' some on 'em libin' on it fur forty, fifty, sixty, an' seventy yar. Out ob dese, we hab only firty-six full hands, 'case some ob de wimmin dat come in de ages fur full wuck am sickly, puny tings, only fit fur house wuck or nussin'. From de whole, I gits equal ter 'bout fifty full hands. 'Cordin' to massa Robert's direction, I gib 'em easy ten-hour wuck; but suffin' or oder turn up 'most ebery day, so dat 'bout haff on 'em don't do full wuck, an' I reckon dey don't make, on de whole, more'n 'bout nine hour a day. So you see, Cunnel Dawsey, he hab sixty, an' he wuck 'em fifteen hour a day; we hab only fifty, an' we wuck 'em nine hour a day; an', 'cordin' ter my 'rithmetic, dat would make de Cunnel turn out 'bout twice as much truck as we does."

"And you have twice as many mouths to feed as he," I remarked; "and the result is, he makes money, while you——"

"Lose nigh onter two thousand a yar, Mr. Kirke, an' hab done it ebery yar fur five yar, eber since massa Robert come on ter de plantation, an' gwo ter workin' on human principles, as he call 'em."

This was said in so sad and regretful a tone, that, in spite of the serious manner of both the black and his master, I could not help laughing.

Digitized by Google

"Joe," said I, "what would you do to mend this state of affairs?"

"It can't be mended, ef we stay in dis ole country, an' wuck 'cordin' ter massa Robert's notion."

"Then you mean to say you can't apply humane principles to slave labor, in an old district, and make money?"

"Yes," said Preston, rising, and pacing up and down in the small semicircle formed by the rosin barrels; "that is what he means to say, and it is true."

"Then how do the majority of turpentine planters in this section make money? They *do* make it, that is certain."

"By overworking their hands, as Dawsey does. All may not be as severe with them as he is, but all overwork them, more or less," replied Preston.

"I don't know 'bout dat, massa Robert; twelve, an' eben firteen hour a day neber hurt a prime hand, ef he hab good feed."

"Well, it is six o'clock, and supper must be in waiting," said Preston, drawing out his watch; "we'll talk more on this subject to-night. Joe, bring the books up to the house this evening. Mr. Kirke has promised to look into our affairs, and I shall need you."

"Yas, massa Robert," replied the black; and, mounting our horses, Preston and I rode back to the mansion.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

A SOUTHERN WOMAN

MRS. PRESTON and master Joe were on the piazza awaiting us, and, in the doorway, we were met by the younger children. Preston lifted one of them upon his shoulder, and, taking another in his arms, led the way to the supper room. However disturbed might be my friend's relations with the outer world, all was peace by his cheerful fireside. No man was ever more blessed in his home. His children were intelligent, loving, and obedient; his wife was one of those rare women—seen nowhere more often than in the South—who, to a cultivated mind and polished manners, add the more homely accomplishments of a good housewife. It is years since she laid aside the weary cares of her plantation home, and entered on the higher duties of another life; but her kindly image is still as fresh in my memory as on that autumn day, when she placed her hand in mine for the last time, and spoke the last "God bless you" which I was to hear from her lips on this side of the grave. She was a perfect woman—a faithful mistress, a loving wife, a devoted mother. Anticipating every want of her husband, carefully instructing her children, overseeing every detail of her household, meting out the weekly allowance of the negroes, visiting

Digitized by Google

daily the cabins of the sick and the infirm, and with her own hand dispensing the soothing cordial or the healing medicine,—or, when all medicine failed, bending over the lowly bed of the dying, and pointing him to the "better home on high,"—she was a ministering angel—a joy and a blessing to all about her. She wore no costly silks, no diamonds on her fingers, or jewels in her hair; but she was arrayed in garments all rich and beautiful with human love. She knew nothing—thought nothing—about the right or the wrong of slavery; but, cheerfully and prayerfully, never wearying and never doubting, she went on in the round of duties allotted her, leaning on the arm of the GOOD ALL-FATHER, and looking steadfastly to HIM for guidance and support. And, truly, she had her reward. "Her children rose up and called her blessed; her husband, also, and he praised her."

Supper was soon over, when my hostess rose, and conducted me to the library. That apartment was in a wing communicating with the mansion by a covered passage way It was plainly furnished, but had a cosy, homelike appearance. Its four walls were lined with books, some standing on end, some resting on their sides, and some leaning negligently against each other; and on the massive centre table, open volumes, old newspapers, and unfinished manuscripts were littered, in most delightful confusion. A half dozen old-fashioned chairs straggled about the floor, as if they did not know exactly what to do with themselves, and a score of old worthies, their faces white as chalk, and their long hair and beards powdered with a whole generation of dust, looked complacently down from the top of the bookshelves. Dust was on the table, on the chairs, on the

Digitized by Google

floor, on the ceiling, and on the musty old volumes ranged along the walls, and dust everywhere told unmistakably that no profane hand ever disturbed the dusty repose which reigned in the apartment.

Two or three oaken logs, supported on bright brass andirons—the only bright things in the room—were blazing cheerfully on the broad hearthstone; and, drawing our chairs near, we sat down before them.

"May I come in?" said master Joe, thrusting his head in at the half-closed doorway.

"No, my son," answered his father; "Mr. Kirke and I are to talk over business matters."

"Do let him come, Robert," said Mrs. Preston; "he is old enough to learn something of such affairs."

The lad entered, and, seating himself on a low stool by the side of his mother, and burying his head in her lap, was soon fast asleep.

"This room, Mr. Kirke," said the lady, "is sacred to Robert and the dust. I beg you will not think I have the care of it."

"Oh no, madam; it is plain that a *man* has exclusive dominion here. But your husband has been away for some time."

"That does not account for the dust; it hasn't been stirred for a twelvemonth;" and, after a pause, she added, a thin moisture glistening in her eyes, "I have not yet thanked you, sir, for saving Phyllis and the children from the clutches of that wretched trader."

"No thanks are requisite, madam. It was a mere matter of business; we are in the practice of making advances to our consignors."

Digitized by Google

"Nevertheless we thank you, sir; Robert and I will ever be grateful for it."

"Do not speak of it, madam; I would be glad to serve you to a much greater extent."

The lady made no reply, and a rather embarrassing silence followed for some minutes, when I said:

"Preston, Joe is a remarkable negro; I think I never met one so intelligent and well informed."

"He *is* very intelligent," he replied; "he has fine natural abilities."

"It is a pity Nature gave him so dark a skin, and made him a—slave."

"Not a *pity*, Mr. Kirke," rejoined Mrs. Preston; "Nature, or rather God, always puts us in our right places. Joseph is more useful where he is, than he would be anywhere else."

"I understood him that he was raised on the plantation," I added.

"Yes," replied my host; "my grandfather bought his mother when she was a girl. She was a favorite house-servant, and Joe was born in a room over where we are sitting. This building was then all there was of the mansion."

"And how did he pick up so much information?"

"The old gentleman, who gave little heed to either law or gospel, taught them both to read and write." [Years after the date of this conversation, I learned that Joe was the son of that lawless, graceless old gentleman.] "And Joe, when a boy, read everything he could lay his hands on. Since I have brought my library here, he has devoured about half of the books in it. He devotes every night, from eight o'clock to twelve, to reading."

Digitized by Google

"I am surprised, that, with so much reading, he uses so entirely the negro dialect."

"But he does not. In common conversation he expresses himself in it, for it is the dialect in which a black does his ordinary thinking; but let him get upon an elevated subject, as he frequently does in his sermons, and you will hear words as strong, pure, and simple as any found in the Bible, flow from him like a stream."

"Does he preach every Sunday?"

"Yes; I usually catechize the people in the evening, and he preaches in the morning."

"But do you learn all your negroes to read?"

"No, the law does not allow it. I teach them to repeat the catechism, texts of Scripture, and passages from good books, and I explain these to them."

"And Joe is your overseer?"

"Not exactly that. My father made him overseer about thirty years ago, but the law requires a white man in that situation; and when I took charge of the plantation, the neighbors made a clamor about my having a black. The result was, I 'whipped the devil round the stump,' by hiring a white distiller, and *calling* him 'overseer.' I let Joe, however, 'oversee' him, as you have seen to-day."

A rap came then at the door, and master Joe, waking up, ushered the subject of our conversation into the room. He held his hat in his hand, and had under his arm a couple of account books.

"This is Joseph the First," said the lad, taking the black by the coat-tail, and bowing gravely to me.

"And you are Joseph the Second, I suppose?"

Digitized by Google

"Yas, sar; he'm dat 'stinguished gemman," replied the negro, stroking affectionately the lad's head; "an' he don't dishonor de name, sar. He'm de true blue, dyed in de wool."

"Bring up a chair, Joseph," said the lady, smiling kindly on the black.

"Tank you, missus;" and the negro seated himself by the fire, between Preston and me.

"You have brought the documents, I see, Joe; let me look at them," I said, reaching out my hand for the books.

"Yas, sar; an' dey'm all written up ter a week back. I reckon *you* kin pick 'em out, Mr. Kirke, dough massa Robert he say he don't understand my way ob keepin' em."

I opened the books, and any man of business will appreciate my surprise to find they were kept by "double entry." Cotton, corn, and turpentine had each its separate account, and at a glance I could see how much had been made or lost in the production of each staple. The handwriting was plain and bold, and the general appearance of the ledger compared favorably with that of a much larger one I knew of, which was the pride of an experienced bookkeeper.

"Why, Joe, I'm astonished!" I exclaimed, with unaffected gratification; "you write like a schoolmaster."

A flush, which would have been a blush on a lighter skin, overspread the negro's face, as he replied:

"I don't hab practice 'nuff, Mr. Kirke, ter write bery well."

"Practice!" said Preston; "he has constant practice; he writes the love letters of all the darkies in the district."

"It am so, dat's a fac', sar," said Joe, a quiet humor twinkling in his eye. "One ob Cunnel Dawsey's folk come ter me

Digitized by Google

ter day—his wife hab been sold down Soufh, an' he wanted ter say ter har, dat dough ribers rose, an' mountins run atween 'em, he'd neber hab nuffin' ter do wid no oder 'ooman—so he comes ter me, an' I writes de letter; an' when I'd a put in all de ribers, an' de mountins, an' eber so many runs, an' tought I'd done it up right smart, I read it ober ter him, but he say he sort ob reckoned it warn't quite done up 'pletely—not 'xactly 'cluded; so he 'sisted I muss 'sert a pose scrip, axin' har ter 'scuse de bad writin'."

"And you did it?"

"Yas, sar, I done it."

"Well, Joe, the important thing just now is, how much you owe. Give me a slip of paper, and let me put these balances together."

"I'se done dat, Mr. Kirke; here dey am," and he handed me a correctly drawn-up statement, showing Preston's exact liabilities. I glanced over it, compared it with the footings in the ledger, and said:

"I see by this, Preston, that you owe seventeen hundred dollars, floating debt; twelve hundred dollars, interest on your mortgage; and are overdrawn five hundred dollars on our house."

"Yes, so Joe makes it, and I reckon he's correct."

"But dar'm de six hunderd you 'cepted fur massa Robert, de oder day, in Newbern; dat ain't counted in," said Joe.

"Well, all told, it's four thousand, besides the note I have given for Phyllis. What do you calculate on to pay it, Preston?"

"I don't know. How can we pay it, Joe?"

"We moight sell de two stills, an' some ob de hosses; I

Digitized by Google

reckon dey'd be 'nuff," replied the black; "but de raal trubble, massa Robert, am what's comin'; we'm gwine ahind ebery day, 'case we lose money on ebery crop ob turpentine. Nuffin' pay now but de corn an' de cotton, an' we don't raise 'nuff ob dem ter do no good."

I turned to the ledger, and found it showed what the black said to be true—corn and cotton had made a handsome profit, but turpentine had "paid a loss."

"That is because your trees are old, and now yield little of anything but scrape," * I said.

"Yas, sar; an' 'case dey am so thin like, sence we clean out de pore ones, dat it take a hand long time ter git 'round 'mong 'em."

"Why not drop turpentine, and cut shingles from the swamp? You've a fortune in those cypress trees."

"My negroes are not accustomed to swamp work—it would kill them," replied Preston.

"Mr. Kirke," said Joe,—"you'll take no 'fence, massa Robert, ef I says dis?"

"No; go on," said his master.

"De ting am right in a nutshell, an' jess so clar as apple jack: we owes a heap; we'se gittin' inter debt deeper an' deeper ebery yar; we lose money workin' de ole trees; we hain't got no new ones; an' dar's no use ter talk; massa Robert *won't* put de hands inter de swamp. What, den, shill we do?"

* 'Scrape' is the turpentine gathered from the face of the pine. On old trees, the yearly incision is made high above the boxes, and the sap, in flowing down, passes over and adheres to the previously scarified surface. It is thus exposed to the sun, which evaporates the more volatile and valuable portion, and leaves only the hard, which, when manufactured, is mostly rosin. "Scrape" turpentine is only about half as valuable as "dip."

Digitized by Google

Avoiding the darky's question, I said: "I never before understood why slavery is so clamorous for new fields. I see, now—it can draw support only from the virgin soil. It exhausts an old country. Like the locusts of Egypt, it eats up the very face of the earth!"

"That is true," replied Preston; "but Joe has stated the case correctly. What shall we do?"

"One of two things: sell your plantation and negroes, or take your hands to a new section, where you can raise virgin turpentine."*

"I cannot sell my negroes—they were all raised with me; and the plantation—it was my ancestors', over a hundred years ago. I would move my hands to a new section, but I have not the means to buy land."

"Ay, dar's de rub," said Joe.

"If you could satisfy your outside creditors that things were likely to go better with you in future, could you put them off for a time?" I asked.

"I reckon I could—nearly all of them," replied Preston.

"Well, then, I'll make you a proposition. Buy ten thousand acres on the line of the Manchester railroad. It is finished to Whitesville, and you can buy land within twenty miles of that station, at seventy-five cents an acre. We'll advance the twenty per cent. you'll have to pay down, and five hundred dollars more to start you there, and hold the deed of the land to secure us. Ship your produce to us, and agree to forfeit the land, if, at the end of three years, you have not paid all the original advance. Move your stills, and your able bodied men and women there, leaving the old and the young negroes here

* "Virgin" turpentine is twice as valuable as "dip."

Digitized by Google

to raise corn and cotton. Hire fifty more prime hands, and put Joe over the whole, with unlimited power to work them to death, if he pleases."

Preston leaned his head on his hand, as if bewildered—he seemed not to understand me; but Joe's face lighted as if a stream of electricity were playing under his dark skin. Mrs. Preston was the first to speak.

"Robert will do it, Mr. Kirke; and how can we ever thank you enough for your generous conduct toward us? You have taken a weary load off our hearts."

"It is a simple business transaction, madam; I expect to make money by it. Your husband is to consign his produce to us, and I shall require the forfeit of the land and the improvements, if he does not pay our advances within three years."

"We kin pay 'em in *one* yar, an' you knows it, sar!" exclaimed Joe, springing to his feet, and almost dancing around the room. "Come, massa Robert, look up, an' tell 'im we'll do it, fur ole Joe'll make de chips fly as you neber seed afore."

Preston looked up, as he said: "My friend, I thank you."

"You need not say *that;* only buy the land, and make Joe autocrat of the new plantation, and your bacon is cured."

"Joe'll show you how bacon am cured, Mr. Kirke; an' he'll name his fuss boy af'er you, *shore!*" shouted the black, grinning all over.

"He can safely promise that," said the lady, laughing through her tears; "for Aggy is fifty, and never had a child."

A half-hour's conversation over the details of the proposed

Digitized by Google

arrangement followed; then Joe rose, and, taking the account books under his arm, bade us "good evenin'." As he was leaving the room, I asked: "Do you preach tomorrow?"

"Yas, sar; an' I'se gwine home ter study ober de sermon. You'll come dar, sar? You won't yere no raal preachin', 'less massa Robert feels de sperrit move, fur de Lord don't gib de brack man de tongue He gib de white."

"I'm not sure of that; but I'll be there. Good night."

"Good night, sar, an' de Lord bless you."

When he had gone, I said to Preston: "You have admitted me to your confidence, and asked my advice; therefore, I think you'll pardon me, if I make you a few business suggestions."

"Most certainly; and I shall be guided by them."

"With a hundred hands in those thick woods, Joe will turn out a vast amount of produce. His ambition is excited with the idea of being his own master, and he will coin money for you; but you need to be prudent. You owe a mortgage of twenty thousand dollars—and mortgage debts are the worst in the world. Your plantation and negroes may be worth three times the amount, but they are in jeopardy so long as it exists. If it were called in suddenly, you couldn't pay it; your property would be sacrificed—everything might be lost. Now I would suggest that you sell, at once, your three hundred acres of swamp land, all your surplus live stock and materials, and appropriate the proceeds to paying your floating debt, and reducing the mortgage."

"And we might reduce our family expenses, Robert," said his wife; "we have too many house-servants. We could hire

Digitized by Google

out five or six of them in Newbern. And Joseph's schooling costs us five hundred dollars a year; he might come home—*I* could teach him."

"You would take too much on yourself, Lucy," replied her husband. "You are not strong, and you can't spare a single servant."

"How many have you?" I asked.

"Nine," said Preston.

"For a family of two adults and three children?'

"It strikes you as too many, Mr. Kirke," said the lady, "and it is. It is our Southern way; but every additional servant makes additional work for the mistress."

"I think you are right, madam," I replied. "A Northern lady that you know of, takes care of me, Frank, the two young children, and a large house, with only two servants and an errand boy; and she never has anything to do after two o'clock."

"But you have the Irish; they are better house-servants than our blacks; and you can discharge them, if they won't work," said Preston.

"I would rather have Phyllis, than any servant I ever saw at the North. With her, the cook, and one more, I will promise to get on beautifully," remarked his wife.

Preston's voice quivered, as he replied: "Do as you think best."

"But, madam," I said, "I think you are really taking too much on yourself; the care of the children will be a great tax on your strength. Would it not be better to employ a governess to instruct them? What is now expended on Joe, would pay a competent person."

Digitized by Google

"What do you say to that, Joe?" asked his father; "would you like to come home, and have a woman teacher?"

"I'd like to do what mother wants me to," said the lad, putting his arms about her neck, and kissing her.

"You're a good boy, Joe," said his mother.

"But you'll let me keep the pony, won't you, father?" said the lad.

"Yes, my son; and if you learn well, you shall go with uncle James when you're fifteen."

Shortly afterward, we separated for the night.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEGRO MEETING.

On a gentle knoll, a few hundred yards from the negro quarters, and in the midst of a grove of pines, whose soft brown tassels covered the ground all around it, stood the negro meeting house. It was built of unhewn logs, its crevices chinked with clay, and was large enough to seat about two hundred persons. Though its exterior resembled a backwoods barn, its interior had a neat and tasteful appearance. Evergreen boughs hid its rough beams and bare shingled roof, and long wreaths of pine leaves hung in graceful festoons from its naked walls and narrow windows. On the two sides of a wide aisle, which served to separate the sheep on the right hand from the goats on the left, were long rows of benches, with hard board bottoms, and rough, open backs; and beyond them, divided from the rest of the interior by a rustic railing, was the "family pew"—an enclosure about twelve feet square, neatly carpeted, and furnished with half a dozen arm chairs. Opposite to this was a platform elevated three steps from the floor, and on it stood a rustic settee, a large easy chair, and a modest desk covered with green baize, and decorated with small sprigs of evergreen. On this desk rested a large Bible.

The enormous seashell which served as a bell to this "house

Digitized by Google

of prayer," was sending its last blast in long echoes through the old trees, when, with Mrs. Preston and the children, I elbowed an opening through the thick group of grinning Africans that blocked the doorway, and worked a passage down the crowded aisle to the family enclosure. Seating myself in one of its cane-bottomed chairs, I glanced around on the assemblage. Such a gathering of woolly heads I had never seen. Every plantation within a circuit of five miles had sent in a representation, till the benches, the aisle, the small area around the pulpit, and the open space near the doorway were all densely packed. On the left, the men, in gaudy cravats and many-colored waistcoats, were chatting merrily together, and enjoying themselves as heartily as a parcel of Yankees at a clam-bake; and on the right, the women, in red and yellow turbans, and flaming shawls and neckerchiefs, were bobbing about and flaunting their colors, like so many dolphins sporting in the sunshine. Preston was seated in the lone chair at the back of the pulpit, and Boss Joe and Black Jack occupied the settee near him. The latter shortly rose to open the services, and, in a moment, a deep silence fell on the noisy multitude. The old preacher had carefully combed his thin wool into a pyramid on the top of his head, and he looked—dressed in glossy black pants, long-tailed blue coat, ruffled shirt, and high shirt collar—like a stuffed effigy at an exhibition of wax figures. Stepping rather unsteadily to the front of the platform, he flourished his red cotton bandanna, and, spreading his huge claws over the large Bible, said:

"Dear bred'rin, leff us begin de worship ob de Lord, by singin':

"'From all dat dwell below de skies,
Leff de Creator's praise arise.'"

Digitized by Google

A half dozen darky fiddlers at the left of the pulpit tuned their strings, and then the whole assemblage rose, and burst into that grand old hymn. As its last echoes came back from the old woods, and died away among the rafters of the little church, Joe got up, and, opening the large Bible, read, in a clear, mellow voice, a portion of the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm. Then the old darky again came forward.

Gazing complacently around on the audience for a moment, he drawled out: "My bred'rin, leff us raise our hearts ter de Lord." The whole congregation then kneeled, and Jack, closing his eyes, clenching his hands together, and throwing his head back, until his nose came nearly on a line with the roof of the building, "lifted up his voice" and prayed.

After the fashion of very many white preachers, he began by telling the Lord all about Himself; all He had ever done, and all He is going to do; how long He had lived, and how long He is going to live; how great He is—"taller dan de mountins, an' bigger dan de seas;" how He made the world in six days, and then, "gittin' tired, rested on de sevenfh;" how he formed man out of the dust of the ground, and then, out of his rib, formed woman; how the woman tempted the man, and he fell, and how woman has raised Cain on the earth ever since; how He sent the flood, and how Noah builded the ark; how Noah axed all the wild critters into it, and how they all came in two by two, and how Noah and the wild beasts lay down lovingly together, till the wet spell was over; how Moses, when he came down from the mount, "stumbled, and broke de law; an' how ebery one ob us dat hab come inter de worle sence, hab stumbled, an' broke de law, 'case he did;" how Noah, though he was a white man, and had a white wife,

Digitized by Google

begat a black son; and how that black son was a great sinner, and how all his descendants have taken after him, and been mighty big sinners ever since.

Then he described the sinners, particularly the black sinners present; and if half of what he said was true, every one of them deserved to be sold "down Soufh," and kept on cold hominy and hoecake all the rest of his days.

The prayer was a strange medley of absurdity, presumption, and profanity, and I felt relieved to hear his long "amen," and to see Joe rise, and again approach the pulpit.

Requesting some one present to raise a few of the windows (I took occasion, afterward, to thank him for that very considerate action), Joe opened the Bible, and said: "My friends, I am gwine ter talk ter you from de tex, 'An' dey drew an' lifted up Joseph out ob de pit, an' sold Joseph to de Ishmaelites fur twenty pieces ob silver; an' dey brought Joseph inter Egypt.'

"You all knows," he continued, "de story ob Joseph an' his bred'rin; how dey wus raised up by dar fader Jacob in a wile country, whar dar warn't no schools, an' no 'telligence, an' no larnin'; an' how his fader lub'd Joseph more dan all ob his bred'rin, an' made fur him a coat ob many colors. But p'raps you don't know dat de Lord lub Joseph a great sight better'n his fader did, an' 'case He lub him so, dat He harden de hearts ob his bred'rin agin him, till dey sole him ter de Ishmaelites—de slave-traders ob dem days—ter be taken down inter Egypt. An' p'raps you don't know dat Egypt wus a great country, whar dar wus schools, an' churches, an' great libraries ob books, an' all manner ob sciences; an' dat Joseph wus made de lord ob all dat country, an' dat finarly he got his

Digitized by Google

fader, an' his bred'rin, an' dar wifes, an' all dar little ones, ter come down dar, an' stay; whar, dough de tasks war sometimes hard, an' dey had to 'arn dar bred by de sweat ob dar brow, dey could git knowledge an' larnin'. An' p'raps, too, you don't know dat de chil'ren ob Israel, who war de chil'ren ob Joseph an' his bred'rin, when dey'd stayed down dar in Egypt de 'pointed time, war taken by de Lord inter de lan' ob Canaan, which wus a lan' 'flowin' wid milk an' honey;' an' dat dey war gib'n dat lan' fur dar possession. Now, my friends," and he paused, and looked around on the congregation, "de story ob Joseph am de story ob de brack man: *he* hab been taken out ob de pit; *he* hab been sole fur twenty pieces ob silver; *he* hab been brought inter Egypt, an', bress de Lord, *he* am boun' fur de lan' ob Canaan.

"He hab been taken out ob de pit. A pit, my friends, am a dark place, whar de sun neber shine, an' de light neber come; an' Africa, de country whar our faders an' our gran'faders come from, am a pit; fur de darkness cobers dat lan', an' gross darkness de people dareof. Dey hab no cloes; dey lib in cabins made ob clay, an' in holes ob de groun'; dey kill an' eat one anoder, an' dey'm allers at war wid one anoder. But de white man he gwo dar, an' he buy 'em fur twenty pieces ob silver—dat's 'zactly de price—twenty silver dollars—dey pay dat fur 'em up ter dis day—dem pore, ign'rant folks won't take nuffin' but silver. Well, de white man buy 'em, an' he fotch 'em ter dis country, which am like de lan' ob Egypt, full ob schools, ob churches, ob larnin', an' ob all manner ob good tings. Shore, we hab ter wuck hard har; some ob us hab ter bear heaby burdens, an' ter make bricks when we hab no straw ter make 'em wid; but we am in de lan'

Digitized by Google

ob Egypt, whar we hab knowledgd ob de Lord; whar de gospil am preach ter us, an' whar we kin fine out de road ter de lan' ob Canaan. (Ter be shore, we karn't all larn out ob de books; but book larnin' neber make a man, nohow.) Yas, my friends, yere we kin fine out de road ter de lan' ob Canaan; an' do you know what dat lan' ob Canaan, dat'm waitin' fur de brack man, am? Do you s'pose it am a lan' whar de days am hot, an' de nights am cole; whar we'll hoe de cotton, an' gader de turpentine, an' cut de shingles in de swamp; whar we'll wuck till we drap down; whar we'll hunger an' furst; whar de fever will burn in our veins, an' de nager will rattle our bones as de corn am rattled in de hopper? No, my friends; 'tain't no lan' like dat! It am de habitation on high, de city builded ob de Lord, de eberlasting kingdom founded by de Eternal God, who made heaben an' 'arth, de sea, an' all dat in dem is. Oh! tink ob dat, my friends, an' hab courage. Tink ob dat when you'm faint an' a weary, an' leff you' hearts be glad, an' you' souls rejoice in hope. Fur dat lan' ain't 'spressly fur de white man—it am fur de brack man, too; an' ebery one ob us, eben de brackest, kin git ter it ef we'll jess foller de road—ef we'll jess do our duty, bear meekly our burdens, an' lean humbly on de arm ob de Lord. I knows it am so, my friends—I *knows* it am so; fur de oder night, when de deep sleep fell upon me, I dreamed a dream. I fought dar come ter my cabin, an' stood aside ob my bed, a great white angel, wid feet dat touch de 'arth, but wid head dat reach unter de heabens. He wore raiment shinin' like silver, an' on his head wus a girdle ob stars. His face wus dazzlin' as de sun, an' his eyes war like flamin' fire. He look at me, an' he say: 'Joseph, come up hither!' He reach out his han', an' he lift me up—

Digitized by Google

above de 'arth—above de clouds—above de stars—'way up ter de high heabens, whar am de sperrits ob just men made perfect, who hab been redeemed from among men, who hab gone fru great tribulation, whose garments hab been washed clean in de blood ob de Lamb! 'Dis,' he say, 'am de city ob de libin' God, de heabenly Jerusalem, whose foundations am saffomires, whose walls am silver, whose streets am gole, whose housen am jewels an' all precious stones! Yere de sun neber sets; yere de storm an' de hurricane neber come; an' yere, Joseph, am a dwellin' prepared fur you; yere, ef you'm faithful an' 'bedient, you shill come, when you' wuck on de 'arth am ober!'"

The speaker had been gradually warming with his subject, till he uttered this last sentence, when his voice trembled, his face glowed, and his upturned eye seemed fixed on the ineffable glories of the land he was describing. A stillness like that of death fell on the assemblage, and the simple blacks, hanging breathlessly on his words, looked up to where Joe's hand was pointing, as if they, too, had caught the vision on which his eyes were gazing. In a moment, he continued:

"I looked roun', an' I seed dat beautiful city; I breafed its air; I walked its streets; I hard its music—de neber-endin' song which its countless people send up ter de throne ob de Great Fader; an' I say ter de angel: 'Do brack folks lib yere? Kin *dey* come ter dis beautiful country?' An' he say: 'You shill see.' Den he lead me fru dose shinin' streets, out inter de open fiel's, whar war pleasant pasters, greener dan any on de 'arth, an' still waters, dat sparkle in de sun jess like missus' diamonds in de light ob de fire." (I did not know that Mrs. Preston wore diamonds; she certainly had not worn them in my presence.) "He lead me out, till we come ter a great

Digitized by Google

woods, whar fountins war playin', an' birds war singin', an' flowers war growin', an' de air wus full ob fragrance; an' dar I seed a great crowd ob people gadered togeder, a listenin' ter one dat wus a talkin' ter 'em. Dar wus Abr'am, an' Isaac, an' Jacob; dar wus Moses, an' Joseph, an' Samuel; dar wus David, an' Solomon, an' de prophets; dar wus Paul, an' John, an' Peter; dar wus 'most all de great an' good men who hab lib'd in de worle; an' dar, too, right aside ob de one dat wus a speakin', wus de blessed Saviour, wid de woun' in his side, an' de print ob de nails in his hands. An' who do you tink wus a talkin', dar, ter all dem great people? Who do you tink wus fought good 'nuff ter stan' by de side ob de blessed Saviour? It wus a brack man! It wus a brack man, who, down yere, had been ole, an' lame, an' blin', an' ob no account —so no account, he wouldn't sell fur nuffin'. He wus tellin' dem great folks ob de great lub ob de Lord ter him, an' dar tears rolled down as dey hard him. He tole 'em how he usc' ter lib in Car'lina; how he wus a slave; how he'd 'most nuffin' ter eat; how he wus wucked in de swamp; how, 'fore de sun rose, an' 'way inter de night, he use' ter stan' in de mud an' de water, till his bones war sore, his heart wus weary, his soul wus faint; how his massa flog him, 'case he couldn't wuck no more, till de blood run down his back, an' it wus a ridged like de ploughed groun'; how his wife wus whipped ter death afore his bery eyes; how his chil'ren—all 'cept one—war sole 'way from him; how dat one 'bused him, an' flogged him, an' tormented him, till he wus jess ready ter die; how, when his hair wus white, his body wus bent, his strength wus gone, an' he wus ole, an' lame, an' blin', his massa drove him 'way, and make him shirk fur himseff; how he beg in de roads; how he sleep

Digitized by Google

in de woods, in de cole an' de rain, till a good gemman take him in, gib him a bed, 'tend ter his wants, an' pray ober him when he die. He tole 'em all dat; but he say, dat fru it all, he hab peace; fru it all, de Lord wus good ter him; fru it all, he felt His lub in his heart; fru it all, de blessed Redeemer wus wid him; fru it all, he knowed dat mercy an' salvation am in de heabens! An' DEY AM DAR! Dey took him 'way—'way from de 'arth—'way from his suff'rin's an' his sorrers down yere, ter joy, an' peace, an' rest up dar—up dar, whar all great an' good men call him brudder; whar de Lord Jehobah call him son, an' whar de blessed Saviour will leff him stan' at his right han', foreber an' eber. An' he, my friends, wus a BRACK MAN! An' who do you s'pose he wus? Who do you s'pose he wus?"

He paused for a moment, as he repeated the question, and then, in a slow, impressive manner, continued:

"It wus ole Cale—Cunnel Dawsey's Cale; an' dat good gemman dat take him in, an' pray ober him when he die, wus *my* massa. Yas, bless de Lord, it wus MY massa!"

As Joe uttered these last words, Preston bowed his head, his wife sobbed aloud, and the black people gave out a low cry, as sad as the wail which their own mourners breathe over the dead. Fixing his eyes on a tall, stalwart negro in the audience, the preacher continued:

"An' he wus *you'* fader, Jake!—you' fader, who, when he wus down yere, you 'bused, an' persecuted, an' treated like a dog, but who, up dar, am fought worthy ter stan' at de Saviour's right han'! I *knows* it wus him, fur I seed him, I talked wid him, an' he gabe me suffin' ter tell you. Stan' up, now, an' yere what he had ter say."

Digitized by Google

The black man's face assumed a dogged expression. He moved uneasily on his seat, but showed no inclination to rise. In a firm, imperious tone, Joe again called out to him:

"Stan' up, I say! Folks like you' fader am now, don't talk ter sech as you is when dey'm sittin' down. Stan' up, or I'll gib you what Cunnel Dawsey neber gabe you in all you' life."

The negro reluctantly rose. Every eye was fixed upon him, as Joe continued:

"He ax me ter say ter you, Jake, dat he lubs you—lubs you bery much; dat he fully an' freely furgibs you fur all de wrong you eber done him—fur all de tears an' de sorrer you eber cause him. An' he say ter me: 'Tell Jake dat I'se been down dar, an' seed him. I'se seed how he shirk his wuck; how he 'buse his wife an' chil'ren; how he hate his massa, an' mean ter kill him—(dough his massa am hard on him, 'tain't no 'scuse fur dat); how he swar, an' lie, an' steal, an' teach all de oder brack folks ter do de same; how he'm no fought ob his soul, no fought ob dyin', no fought ob whar he'm gwine when de Lord's patience am clean done gone wid him. Tell him, dat ef he gwo on dis way, he'll neber see his ole fader no more; neber see his ole mudder, an' his little brudders, who am up yere, no more; neber come ter dis fine country, but be shet out inter outer darkness, whar am weepin', an' wailin', an' knashin' ob teeth. Oh! tell him dis, an' 'treat him, by all his fader's keer fur him when he wus a chile; by all his lub fur him now; by all de goodness ob de Lord, who hab borne wid him fru all dese long years, ter turn roun'—ter turn roun', NOW, an' sot his face toward dis blessed country, whar he kin hab joy foreber! Tell him, too, dat ef he'll do dis, his ole

Digitized by Google

fader'll leab his happy home, an' come down dar an' holp him —holp him at his wuck; holp him ter bar ebery load; gib him strength when he'm weak; hole up his feet when he'm weary; watch ober him day an' night, all de time, till he'm ready ter come up yere, an' lib wid de Saviour foreber! Tell him——"

Joe paused, for a wild cry echoed through the building, and the negro fell in strong convulsions to the floor.

A scene of indescribable excitement and confusion followed, during which the black was carried out, and, more dead than alive, laid upon the ground. When quiet was somewhat restored, Preston made a short and feeling prayer; and then, after giving out a hymn, he dismissed the congregation with the usual benediction.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

BLACK CLAIRVOYANCE.

THE afternoon exercises at the meeting house were conducted by Preston, who publicly catechized the negroes very much in the manner that is practised in Northern Sunday schools. When the services were over, and the family had gathered around the supper table, I said to him:

"I've an idea of passing the evening with Joe; he has invited me. Would it be proper for you and Mrs. Preston to go?"

"Oh, yes; and we will. I would like to have you see his mother. She is a singular woman, and, if in the mood, will interest you."

"I think you told me she is a native African?"

"Yes; she was brought from Africa when a child. She has a dim recollection of her life there, and retains the language and superstitions of her race," replied Preston, rising from the table. "I think you had better go at once, for she retires early. Lucy and I will follow as soon as we can."

* * * * * *

Joe's cabin was located nearly in the centre of the little collection of negro houses, and a few hundred yards from the mansion. It was of logs, a story and a half high, and had

Digitized by Google

originally been only about twenty feet square. To the primitive structure, however, an addition of the same dimensions had been made, and, stretching for more than forty feet along the narrow bypath which separated the two rows of negro shanties, it then presented quite an imposing appearance. A second addition in the rear, though it did not increase its dignity in the eyes of "street" observers, added largely to its proportions and convenience.

The various epochs in Joe's history were plainly written on his dwelling. The original building noted the time when, a common field hand, he married a wife, and set up housekeeping; the front addition marked the era when his industry, intelligence, and devotion to his master's interest raised him above the dead level of black servitude, and gave him the management of the plantation; and the rear structure spoke pleasantly of a later period, when old Deborah, disabled by age from longer service at "the great house," and too infirm to clamber up the steep ladder leading to Joe's attic bedrooms, came to doze away the remainder of her days under her son's roof.

The cabin was furnished with two entrance doors, and, suspecting that the one in the older portion led directly into the kitchen, I rapped lightly at the other. In a moment it opened, and Joe ushered me into the "living room."

That apartment occupied the whole of the newer front, and had a cheerful, cosy appearance. Its floor was covered with a tidy rag carpet, evidently of home manufacture, and its plastered walls were decorated with tasteful paper, and hung with a variety of neatly framed engravings. Opposite the doorway stood a large mahogany bureau, and over it, suspended from

Digitized by Google

the ceiling by a leathern cord, was a curiously contrived shelving, containing a score or more of well-worn books. Among them I noticed a small edition of Shakspeare, Milton's "Poems," Goldsmith's "England," the six volumes of "Comprehensive Commentary," Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," the "Pilgrim's Progress," a "United States Gazetteer," and a complete set of the theological writings of Swedenborg. Neat chintz curtains covered the small windows, a number of brightly burnished brass candlesticks ornamented a plain wooden mantle over the broad fireplace, and a yellow-pine table, oiled and varnished, on which the "tea things" were still standing, occupied the centre of the apartment.

Through an open door, at the right of the bureau, I caught a glimpse of the dormitory of the aged African. As on the exterior of the building Joe had written a brief epitome of his history, so in that room he had traced a portion of his character. Its comfortable and almost elegant furnishings told, plainer than any words, that he was a devoted and affectionate son. With its worn woolen carpet, red window hangings, cosy lounge, neat centre table, and small black-walnut bedstead, it might have been mistaken for the private apartment of a white lady of some pretensions.

It was a little after nightfall when I entered the cabin, but a bright fire, blazing on the hearth, gave me a full view of its occupants. Aggy, a tidily clad, middle-aged yellow woman, was clearing away the supper table, and Joe's mother was smoking a pipe in a large armchair, in the chimney corner.

The old negress wore a black levantine gown, open in front, and gathered about the waist by a silken cord; a red and yellow turban, from underneath which escaped a few frosted

Digitized by Google

locks, and a white cambric neckerchief that fell carelessly over her shoulders, and almost hid her withered, scrawny neck. She was upward of seventy, but so infirm that she appeared nearly a hundred. One of her lean, skinny arms, escaping from the loose sleeve of her dress, rested on her knee; and her bowed, bony frame leaned against the arm of her chair, as if incapable of sitting upright. Her features, with the exception of her nose, which curved slightly upward, were thin and regular; and her eyes were large, deep, and densely black, and seemed turned inward, as if gazing with a half-wondering stare at the strange mechanism which held together her queer framework of bones and gutta percha.

I recognized her as the old woman who had greeted Preston so affectionately on our arrival.

Turning to her, as he tendered me a chair, Joe said:

"Mudder, dis am Mr. Kirke."

Making a feeble effort to rise, and reaching out her trembling hand, she exclaimed, in a voice just above a whisper:

"You'm welcome yere, right welcome, sar."

"Thank you, aunty. Pray keep your seat; don't rise on my account."

"Tank *you*, massa Kirke, fur comin' yere. It'm bery good ob you. Ole nussy lub you, sar; you'm so good ter massa Robert. He'm my own chile, sar!"

This was undoubtedly a figure of speech, for the old woman's skin was altogether too black not to have given a trifle of its shading to the complexion of her children. It was not only black, but blue black, and of that peculiar hue which is seen only on the faces of native Africans.

Seeing that she had relinquished smoking, I said·

Digitized by Google

"Never mind me, aunty; I smoke, myself, sometimes."

"Tank you, sar," she replied, resuming her pipe, and relapsing into her previous position; "ole wimmin lub 'backer, sar."

The low tone in which this was said, made me conclude that further conversation would be exhausting to her; so, turning to Joe and Aggy—the latter had hurried through her domestic employments, and taken a seat near the fire—I entered into a general discussion of the old worthies that occupied Joe's book shelves.

I found the negro had taxed them for house room. He had levied on their best thoughts, and I soon experienced the uneasy sensation which one feels when he encounters a man who can "talk him dry" on almost any subject. On the single topic of the business to which I was educated, I might have displayed—had it not been Sunday night—a greater amount of information; but in knowledge of every subject that was broached, the black was my superior.

The conversation had rambled on for a full half hour, the old negress meanwhile puffing steadily away, and giving no heed to it; when suddenly her pipe dropped from her mouth, her eyes closed, her bent figure became erect, and a quick, convulsive shiver passed over her. Thinking she was about to fall in a fit, I exclaimed:

"Joe! See—your mother!"

"Neber min', sar," he quietly replied; "it'm nuffin'. Only de power am on har."

A few more convulsive spasms followed, when the old woman's face assumed a settled expression; and, swaying her body back and forth with a slow, steady motion, she com-

Digitized by Google

menced humming a low chant. Gradually it grew louder, till it broke into a strange, wild song, filling the room, and coming back in short, broken echoes, from the adjoining apartments. Struck with astonishment, I was about to speak, when Joe, laying his hand on my arm, said:

"Hush, sar! It am de song ob de kidnap slave!"

It was sung in the African tongue, but I thought I heard, as it rose and fell in a wild, irregular cadence, the thrilling story of the stolen black; his smothered cries and fevered moans in the slaver's hold; the shriek of the wind, and the sullen sound of the surging waves breaking against the accursed ship; and, then—as the old negress rose and poured forth quick, broken volumes of song—the loud mirth of the drunken crew, mingled with what seemed dying groans, and the heavy splash of falling bodies striking the sea.

As she concluded—with a firm, stately step, showing none of her previous decrepitude—she approached me.

Seeing that I regarded her with a look of startled interest, Joe said:

"Leff har do what she likes, sar. She hab suffin' ter say ter you."

Taking a small bag* from her bosom, and placing it in the open front of my waistcoat, she reached out her long, skeleton arm, and, placing her hand on the top of my head, chanted a low song. The words were mostly English, but they have passed from my remembrance.

* This was the conjuror's bag of the Africans. It is called "waiter," or "kunger," by the Southern blacks, and is supposed to have the power to charm away evil spirits, and to do all manner of miraculously good things for its wearer. Those that I have seen are harmless little affairs, consisting only of small pieces of rags sewed up in coarse muslin.

Digitized by Google

As she finished the invocation, she took my hands in hers, and, leaning forward and muttering a few low words, seemed trying to read the story imprinted on my palms. Her eyes were closed, and, thinking she might be troubled to see without the use of those organs, I looked inquiringly at her son.

"She doan't need eyes, sar," said Joe, answering my thought; "she'll tell all 'bout you widout dem."

As he said this, she dropped my hands, and, raising her right arm, made several passes over my head; then, resting her hand again upon it, she began chanting another low song.

"What do you see, mudder?" asked Joe, leaning forward, with a look of intense interest on his face.

The old woman then went on to detail some occurrences in my past life; and truth obliges me to say that she told them correctly. They were known to her master, and she might have learned them from him; therefore I was not forced to believe her possessed of supernatural power; still, as she stood there in the dim light of the burning logs, which lit up her tall, black form, and cast a red glow over her thin, weird features, a feeling of awe crept over me, and I rose halfway to my feet.

"Sit still, sar," said Joe, motioning me back into the chair. "You'll break de power."

"You seem to know the past, old woman," I said. "Tell me the future!"

"Stop!" she replied, with an imperious gesture. "Dey'm comin'."

All this while she had stood with her hand on my head, as immovable as a statue. Her voice had a deep, strong tone, and her face wore a look of calm power. Nothing about her

Digitized by Google

reminded me of the weak, decrepit old woman she had seemed but an hour before.

"Dey'm yere!" she said; and, in another moment, the door opened, and Preston and his wife entered.

Without rising or speaking, Joe motioned them to two vacant chairs. As they seated themselves, I said:

"She has told me some curious things."

"She has strange powers," replied Preston.

"Hush, Robert Preston. De swanga gemman ax fur de future!"

Shading, then, her closed eyes with one hand, and leaning forward, as if peering into the far distance, the old negress laid her other hand again on my head, and proceeded to tell me the future. It was portrayed allegorically, and seemed singularly bound up with Preston's. As I look back now, on the twenty years which have passed since then, and think of some of her predictions, and of *some* events which have occurred in my life, I have to admit that the old slave woman had a wonderful talent at guessing. However, who is there that has not been startled by the strange foretellings of some gipsy, black or white? And yet, who believes that any eye but that of the ALL-SEEING can pierce the thick cloud which veils the future?

The next morning I bade adieu to my kind friends, and started again on my journey. Preston accompanied me as far as Wilmington, where we parted: he going on to Whitesville, in search of the new turpentine location; and I proceeding, by the Charleston boat, southward.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

A SCHOOLMISTRESS AND A WIFE.

RETURNING to my home, a few weeks after the events narrated in the previous chapter, in pursuance of a promise made to Preston, I inserted an advertisement in the papers, which read somewhat as follows:

"WANTED, a suitable person to go South, as governess in a planter's family. She must be thoroughly educated, and competent to instruct a boy of twelve. Such a one may apply, by letter;" &c., &c.

A score of replies flowed in within the few following days, but, being excessively occupied with a mass of personal business, which had accumulated in my absence, I laid them all aside, till more than a week had passed. Then, one evening, I took them home, and Kate and I opened the batch. As each one was read by my wife or myself, we commented on the character of the writers, as indicated by the handwriting and general style of the epistles. Rejecting about two thirds as altogether unworthy of attention, we reserved the remaining half dozen for a second inspection. Among these, the one with the cramped, precise chirography was thought to come

Digitized by Google

from an old maid. Another, where five lines of rail fence covered a sheet nearly as large as a ten-acre lot, was the production of a strong-minded woman. A third, on tinted paper, and dotted with blots and erasures, was from a fat lady, who wore her shoes down at the heel, and got up too late for breakfast. "But here, Kate," I exclaimed, as I opened the fourth missive, "this one, in this firm yet ladylike hand—this one will do. Hear what it says:

"'SIR: I think I can answer your requirements. A line addressed to Catharine Walley, B——, N. H., with full particulars, will receive immediate attention.'

"That's the woman, Kate—a business man in petticoats! *She* can manage a boy of twelve!"

"Or a man of twice that age," said Kate, quietly reading the letter. "I wouldn't have that woman in *my* house."

"Why not? She has character, take my word for it. Her letter is as short and sweet as a 'promise to pay.'"

"She has too much character, and not of the right sort. There is no womanliness about her."

"You women are always hard on your own sex. She'll have to manage Joe, and she'll need to be half man to do that. I think I had better write her to come here. I can tell what she is when I see her. I can read a woman like a book."

There was a slight twinkle in my wife's eyes when I said this, and she made some further objections; but I overruled them, and, on the following morning, despatched a letter, inviting Miss Walley to the city.

Returning to my office from "'Change," one afternoon, a

Digitized by Google

few days afterward, I found a lady awaiting me. She rose, as I entered, and gave her name as Miss Walley. She was prepossessing and ladylike in appearance, and there was a certain ease and self-possession in her manner, which I was surprised to see in one directly from a remote country town. She wore a plain gray dress, with a cape of the same material; a straw hat, neatly trimmed with brown ribbon, and, on the inside, a bunch of deep pink flowers, which gave a slight coloring to her otherwise pale and sallow, but intellectual face. Her whole dress indicated refinement and taste. She was tall and slight, with an almost imperceptible stoop in the shoulders, the result of a studious habit; but you forgot this seeming defect in her easy and graceful movements. Her brown hair was combed plainly over a rather low and narrow forehead; her face was long and thin, and her small, clear gray eyes were shaded by brown eyebrows meeting together, and, when she was talking earnestly, or listening attentively, slightly contracting, and deepening her keen and thoughtful expression. Her nose was long, and rather prominent; and her mouth and chin were large, showing character and will; but their masculine expression was relieved by a short upper lip, which displayed to full advantage the finest set of teeth I ever saw.

Referring at once to the object of her visit, she handed me a number of credentials, highly commendatory of her character and ability as a teacher. I glanced over them, and remarked that they were satisfactory. She then questioned me as to the compensation she would receive, and the position of the family needing her services. Answering these inquiries, I added that I was prepared to engage her on the terms I had named.

"I have been in receipt of the same salary as assistant in a

Digitized by Google

school in my native village," she replied; "but what you say of the family of Mr. Preston, and a desire to visit the South, will induce me to accept the situation."

"When will you be ready to go, madam?" I asked.

"At once. To-day, if necessary."

Surprised, and yet pleased with her promptness, I said:

"And are you entirely ready to go so far on so short notice?"

"Yes. The cars leave in the morning, I am told. I will start then."

"And alone?"

"Yes. We Yankee girls are accustomed to takeing care of ourselves."

"I admire your independence. But you pass the night in town; you will, I trust, spend it at my house?"

"Thank you."

Ordering a carriage, and stopping on the way at a hotel to get the single trunk which contained her wardrobe, I conveyed her to my residence.

After supper, we all gathered in the parlor, and I set about entertaining our guest. I had to make little effort to do that, for her conversation soon displayed a knowledge of books and people, and a wit and keenness of intellect, that decidedly entertained me. She was not only agreeable, but brilliant, and, in the course of the evening, made some pleasant overtures to the children. Frank, with a book in his hand, had drawn his chair off to another part of the room, and showed, at first, uncommon reserve for a lad of his warm and genial nature; but gradually, as if in spite of himself, he edged nearer to her. Our little "four-year-old," however, resisting the offered temp-

Digitized by Google

tation of watch and chain, and even sugar-plums, repelled her advances, and hid his curly head only the more closely in the folds of his mother's dress. Kate listened and laughed; but I caught occasionally, as her eyes studied the visitor attentively, a troubled expression, which I well understood. After a while the lady expressed a wish to retire, that she might obtain the rest needed for an early start by the morning train, and Kate conducted her to her apartment.

I felt highly delighted with the idea of being able to send Mrs. Preston so agreeable a companion, and not a little vexed with my wife for not sharing my enthusiasm. When she returned to the parlor, I said:

"Kate, why do you not like her?"

"I can hardly tell *why*," she replied, "but my first impression is confirmed. I would not trust her. Why does she go South for the same salary she has had in New Hampshire?"

"Because she wants to see the world; she's a stirring Yankee woman."

"No; because you told her of Mr. Preston's position in society; and because she hopes to win a plantation and a rich planter."

"Nonsense," I replied. "You misjudge her."

"I tell you, Edmund, she is a cold, selfish, sordid woman; all intellect, and no heart. If I had never seen her face, I should have known that by her voice, and the shake of her hand."

But it was too late—I had engaged her; and at seven o'clock on the following morning she was on her way to the South.

I soon received information of her safe arrival at the plan-

Digitized by Google

tation, and the warm thanks of Preston for having sent him so agreeable a person, and one so well fitted to instruct his children.

* * * * * *

The turpentine location was soon secured, and, early in the following spring, Joe, with about a hundred "prime hands," commenced operations in the new field. Constantly increasing shipments soon gave evidence of the energy with which the negro entered upon his work; and, by the end of the year, Preston had not only paid the advances we made on receiving the deed of the land, but also the note I had given for the purchase of Phyllis. For the first time in five years he was entirely out of our debt.

The next season he hired a force of nearly two hundred negroes, and generously gave Joe a small interest in the new business, with a view to the black's ultimately buying his freedom. His transactions soon became large and profitable both to him and to us. Shortly afterward he paid off the last of his floating debt, and his balances in our hands grew from nothing till they reached five and seven, and often ten thousand dollars.

But heavy affliction overtook him in the midst of his prosperity. His wife and two eldest daughters were stricken down by a prevailing epidemic, and died within a fortnight of each other. A letter which I received from him, at this time, will best relate these events. It was as follows:

"My dear Friend: I have sad, very sad news to tell you. A week ago to-day, I followed the remains of my beloved wife to the grave. Overcome by watching with our children, and grief at their loss, about three weeks since she took their disease, and, sinking rapidly, soon resigned her spotless spirit to

Digitized by Google

the hands of her MAKER. Overwhelmed by this threefold affliction, I have not been able to write you before. Even now I can hardly hold a pen. I am perfectly paralyzed; I can neither act nor think—I can only *feel.*

"You, who have seen her in our home, can realize what she was to my family; but none can know what she has been to me—companion, friend, guide! My stay and support through long years of trial, she is taken from me just as prosperity is dawning on me, and I was hoping to repay, by a life of devotion, some part of what she had borne and suffered on my account. Another angel has been welcomed in heaven, but I am left here—alone—alone, with my grief and my remorse!

"My son is inconsolable, and even little Selly seems to realize the full extent of her loss. The poor little thing will not leave me for a moment. She is now the only comfort I have. Miss Walley has been unremitting in her kindness and attention, taking the burden of everything upon herself. Indeed, I do not know what I should have done without her.

"Time may temper my affliction, but *now*, my dear friend, I am not ROBERT PRESTON."

* * * * * *

Nothing worthy of special mention occurred to the persons whose history I am relating, till about a year after the death of Mrs. Preston. Then, one day late in the autumn, I received information of her husband's approaching marriage with the governess. In the letter which invited me to be present at the ceremony, Preston said: "No one can ever fill the place in my heart that is occupied, and will ever be occupied, by the memory of my sainted wife; but Miss Walley has rendered herself indispensable to me and my family. My studious habits and

Digitized by Google

ignorance of business made me, as you know, even in my full health and strength, a poor manager; and, during the past year, grief has so impaired my spirits, that I have been utterly unfitted for attending to the commonest affairs. But for Miss Walley, everything would have gone to waste and ruin. With the efficiency of a business man, she has attended to my household, overseen my negroes, and managed my entire plantation. In the first months of my bereavement, when grief so entirely overwhelmed me that I saw no one, I did not know to what censorious remark her disinterested devotion to my interests was subjecting her; but recently I have realized the impropriety of a young, unmarried woman occupying the position she holds in my household. Miss Walley, also, has felt this, and some time since notified me, though with evident reluctance, that she felt it imperatively necessary to leave my service. What, then, could I do? My people needed a mistress, my children a mother. She was both. Only one course seemed open; and, after mature deliberation, I offered her my hand, frankly stating that my heart is with the angel who, lost to me here, will be mine hereafter. Satisfied with my friendship and esteem, she has accepted me, and we are to be married on the 26th inst.; when I sincerely trust that you, my dear friend, and your estimable lady, will be present."

That night I took the letter home to my wife. She read it, and, laying it down sadly, said:

"Oh, Edmund! I fear.—I greatly fear for his future!"

* * * * * *

Two years went by, and I did not meet Preston, but our business relations kept us in frequent correspondence, and his letters occasionally alluded to his domestic affairs.

Digitized by Google

Very soon after his marriage with the governess, his son went to live with his uncle, Mr. James Preston, of Mobile, a wealthy bachelor, who long before had expressed the intention of having the boy succeed to his business and estate. "Boss Joe" continued in charge of the turpentine plantation, and had built him a house, and removed his wife and aged mother to his new home. On one of my visits to the South, I stopped overnight with him, and was delighted with his model establishment. Two hundred as cheerful-looking darkies as ever swung a turpentine axe, were gathered in tents and small shanties around his neat log cabin, and Joe seemed as happy as if he were governor of a province.

His operations had grown to such magnitude, that Preston then ranked among the largest producers of the North Carolina staple, and his "account" had become one of the most valuable on our books. Though we sent "accounts current" and duplicates of each "account sales" to his master, our regular "returns" were made to Joe; and no one of our correspondents held us to so strict accountability, or so often expressed dissatisfaction with the result of his shipments, as he.

"I thinks a heap of you, Mr. Kirke," he said, at the close of one of his letters about this time; "but the fact am, thar's no friendship in trade, and you *did* sell that lass pile of truck jess one day too sudden."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

FRANK.

Two more years rolled away. Frank was nearly sixteen. He had grown up a fine, manly lad, and never for one moment had Kate or I regretted the care we had bestowed on his education and training. He was all we could have wished for in our own son, and in his warm love and cheerful obedience we both found the blessing invoked on us by his dying mother.

His affection for Kate was something more than the common feeling of a child for a parent. With that was blended a sort of half worship, which made him listen to her every word, and hang on her every look, as if she were a being of some higher order than he. They were inseparable. He preferred her society to that of his young companions; and often, when he was a child, seated by her knee, and listening, when she told of his "other mother" in the "beautiful heaven," have I seen his eye wander to her face, with an expression which plainly said: "My heart knows no 'other mother' than you." Kate was proud of him; and well she might be, for he was a comely youth; and his straight, closely knit, sinewy frame, dark, deepset eyes, and broad, open forehead, overhung with thick, brown hair, only outshadowed a beautiful mind, an open,

Digitized by Google

upright, manly nature, whose firm and steady integrity nothing could shake.

About this time I received a letter from his father, which, as it had an important bearing on the lad's future career, I give to the reader:

"BOSTON, *September 20th*, 185–.

"DEAR SIR: A recent illness has brought my past life in its true light before me. I see its sin, and I would make all the atonement in my power. I cannot undo the wrong I have done to one who is gone, but I can do my duty to her child. You, I am told, have been a father to him. *I* would now assume that relation, and make you such recompense for what you have done, as you may require. I am too weak to travel, or, indeed, to leave my house, but I am impatient to see my son. May I not ask you to bring him to me at once? Then I will arrange all things to your satisfaction.

"I need not tell you, after saying what I have, that I should feel greatly gratified to possess once more your confidence and regard. I am sincerely yours,

"JOHN HALLET."

In another hand, was the following postscript:

"MY DEAR BOY: John is sincere. Thee can trust him. He has told me *all*. He will do the right thing. Come on with the lad as soon as thee can. Love to Kate.

"Thy old friend, DAVID."

After conferring with my wife, I sent the following reply to these communications:

Digitized by Google

"NEW YORK, *September 22d*, 185–.

"DAVID OF OLD: Thou man after the Lord's own heart. I have Hallet's letter, seasoned with your P. S. He is shrewd. He knew that nothing but your old-fashioned hand would draw a reply from *me*, to any thing written by *him*.

"I've no faith in sick-bed repentances; and none in John Hallet, sick or well.

> "'When the devil was sick,
> The devil a monk would be;
> When the devil got well,
> The devil a monk was he.'

"However, as Hallet is capable of cheating his best friend, even the devil, I will take his letter into consideration; but it having taken him sixteen years to make up his mind to do a right action, it may take me as many days to come to a decision on this subject.

"Frank is everything to us; and nothing but the clearest conviction that his ultimate good will be promoted by going to his father, will induce us to consent to it.

"I do not write Hallet. You may give him as much or as little of this letter as you think will be good for him.

"Kate sends love to you and to Alice; and, dear David, with all the regard I felt for you when I wore a short jacket, and sat on the old stool,

"I am your devoted friend, EDMUND."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

RUSSELL, ROLLINS & CO.

It was a dingy old sign. It had hung there, in sun and rain, till its letters were faint and its face was furrowed. It had looked down on a generation that had passed away, and seen those who placed it there go out of that doorway, never to return; still it clung to that dingy old warehouse, and still Russell, Rollins & Co. was signed in the dingy old counting room at the head of the stairway. It was known the world over. It was heard of on the cotton fields of Texas, in the canebrakes of Cuba, and amid the rice swamps of Carolina. The Chinaman spoke of it as he sipped his tea and plied his chopsticks in the streets of Canton; and the half-naked negro rattled its gold as he gathered palm oil and the copal gum on the western coast of Africa. Its plain initials, painted in black on a white ground, waved from tall masts over many seas, and its simple "promise to pay," scrawled in a bad hand on a narrow strip of paper, unlocked the vaults of the best bankers in Europe. And yet it was a dingy old sign! Men looked up to it as they passed by, and wondered that a cracked, weather-beaten board, that would not sell for a dollar, should be counted "good for a million."

It was a dingy old warehouse, with narrow, dark, cob-

Digitized by Google

webbed windows, and wide, rusty iron shutters, which, as the bleak October wind swept up old Long Wharf, swung slowly on their hinges with a sharp, grating creak. I heard them in my boyhood. Perched on a tall stool at that old desk, I used to listen, in the long winter nights, to those strange, wild cries, till I fancied they were voices of the uneasy dead, come back to take the vacant seats beside me, and to pace again, with ghostly tread, the floor of that dark old counting room. They were a mystery and a terror to me; but they never creaked so harshly, or cried so wildly, as on that October night, when, for the first time in nine years, I turned my steps up the trembling old stairway.

It was just after nightfall. A single gas burner threw a dim, uncertain light over the old desk, and lit up the figure of a tall, gray-haired man, who was bending over it. He had round, stooping shoulders, and long, spindling limbs. One of his large feet, encased in a thick, square-toed shoe, rested on the round of the desk; the other, planted squarely on the floor, upheld his spare, gaunt frame. His face was thin and long, and two deep, black lines under his eyes contrasted strangely with the pallid whiteness of his features. His clothes were of the fashion of those good people called "Friends," and had served long as his "Sunday best," before being degraded to daily duty. They were of plain brown, and, though not shabby, were worn and threadbare, and of decidedly economical appearance. Everything about him, indeed, wore an economical look. His scant coat tails, narrow pants, and short waistcoat, showed that the cost of each inch of material had been counted; while his thin hair, brushed carefully over his bald head, had not a lock to spare; and even his large, sharp bones

Digitized by Google

were covered with only just enough flesh to hold them comfortably together. He had stood there till his eye was dim and his step feeble; and though he had, for twenty years—when handing in each semiannual trial balance to the head of the house—declared that was his last, everybody said he would continue to stand there till his own trial balance was struck, and his earthly accounts were closed forever.

As I entered, he turned his mild blue eye upon me, and, taking my hand warmly in his, exclaimed:

"My dear boy, I am glad to see thee!"

"I am glad to see *you*, David. Is Alice well?"

"Very well. And Kate, and thy babies?"

"All well," I replied.

"Thee has come to see John?"

"Yes. How is he?"

"Oh! better; he got out several days ago. He's inside now;" and, opening the door of an inner office, separated from the outer one by a glass partition, he said: "John, Edmund is here."

A tall, dark man came to the door, and, with a slightly flurried and embarrassed manner, said:

"Ah, Mr. Kirke! I'm glad to see you. Please step in."

As he tendered me a chair, a shorter and younger gentleman, who was writing at another desk, sprang from his seat and, slapping me familiarly on the back, exclaimed:

"My dear fellow, how are you?"

"Very well, Cragin; how are *you?*" I replied, returning his cordial greeting.

"Good as new—never better in my life. It's good for one's health to see you *here*."

Digitized by Google

"I have come at Mr. Hallet's invitation."

"Yes, I know. Hallet has told me you've a smart boy you want us to take. Send him along. Boston's the place to train a youngster to business."

The last speaker was not more than thirty, but a bald spot on the top of his head, and a slight falling in of his mouth, caused by premature decay of the front teeth, made him seem several years older. He had marked but not regular features, and a restless, dark eye, that opened and shut with a peculiar wink, which kept time with the motion of his lips in speaking. His clothes were cut in a loose, jaunty style, and his manner, though brusque and abrupt, betokened, like his face, a free, frank, whole-souled character. He was several years the junior of the other, and as unlike him as one man can be unlike another.

The older gentleman, as I have said, was tall and dark. He had a high, bold forehead, a pale, sallow complexion, and wore heavy, gray whiskers, trimmed with the utmost nicety, and meeting under a sharp, narrow chin. His face was large, his jaws wide, and his nose pointed and prominent; but his mouth was small, and gathered in at the corners like a rat's; and, as if to add to the rat resemblance, its puny, white teeth seemed borrowed from that animal. There was a stately precision in his manner, and a stealthy softness in his tread, not often seen in combination, which might have impressed a close observer as indicative of a bold, pompous, and yet cunning character.

These two gentlemen—Mr. Hallet and Mr. Cragin—were the only surviving partners of the great house of Russell, Rollins & Co.

Digitized by Google

"Have you brought him with you?" asked Hallet, his voice trembling a little, and his pale face flushing slightly as he spoke.

"No, sir," I replied; "I thought I would confer with you first. I have not yet broached the subject to the lad."

Some unimportant conversation followed, when Hallet, turning to Cragin, asked:

"Are all the letters written for to-morrow's steamer?"

"Yes," said Cragin, rising; "and I believe I'll leave you two together. As you've not spoken for ten years, you must have a good deal to say. Come, David," he called out, as he drew on his outside coat, "let's go."

"No; don't take David," I exclaimed; "I want to talk with the old gentleman."

"But you can see him to-morrow."

"No; I return in the morning."

"Well, David, I'll tell Alice you'll be home by nine."

"Oh! that's it," I said, laughing. "It's Alice who makes you leave so early on steamer night."

"Yes, *sir;* Alice that *is*, and Mrs. Augustus Cragin that is *to be*—when I get a new set of teeth. Good night;" and, saying this, he took up his cane, and left the office.

When he was gone, Hallet said to me:

"Do you desire that David should be a witness to our interview?"

"I want him to be a *party* to it. We can come to no arrangement without his coöperation."

Hallet asked the bookkeeper in. When he was seated, I said:

Digitized by Google

"Well, Mr. Hallet, what do you propose to do for your son?"

"To treat him as I do my other children. Do all but acknowledge him. That would injure him."

"That is not important. But please be explicit as to what you will do."

"David tells me that the lad's inclinations tend to business, and that you have meant to take him into your office. I will take him into *mine*, and, when he is twenty-one—if he has conducted himself properly, give him an interest."

"I shall be satisfied with no *contingent* arrangement, sir. I know Frank will prove worthy of the position."

"Very well; then I will agree definitely to make him a partner when he is of age."

"Well, Mr. Hallet, if Frank will consent to come, I will agree to this, with certain conditions. I told his mother, when she was dying, that I would consider him my own child; therefore I cannot give up the control of him. He must regard me and depend on me as he does now. Besides, I cannot let him come here, and have no home whose influence shall protect him from the temptations which beset young men in large cities. David must take him into his family, and treat him as he treated me when I was a boy; and—this must be reduced to writing."

Hallet showed some emotion when I spoke of Frank's mother, but his face soon resumed its usual expression, and he promptly replied:

"I will agree to all that; but I would suggest that the fact of his being my son should not be communicated to him; that

Digitized by Google

it should be confined to us three. I ask this, believe me, only for the sake of my family."

"I see no objection to that, sir; and I think Frank, for his own sake, should not know what his prospects are."

Hallet signified assent, and, turning to David, I asked:

"David, what do *you* say? Will you take him?"

"I will," said the old bookkeeper, showing, in his expenditure of breath, the close economy which was the rule of his life.

"Nothing remains but to arrange his salary, and the share he shall have when he becomes a partner," I remarked to Hallet.

"Will an average of seven hundred a year, and an eighth interest when he's twenty-one, be satisfactory?"

"Entirely so. An eighth in your house will be better than a quarter in ours. As it is now all understood, let David draw up the papers. We will sign them, and leave them with him till I see Frank."

"Very well. David, please to draw them up," said Hallet; and then, his voice again trembling a little, he added: "All is understood, Mr. Kirke, but the compensation I shall make you for your fatherly care of my much-neglected son. Money cannot pay for such service, but it will relieve me to reimburse you for your expenditures."

"I have had my pay, sir, in the love of the boy. I ask no more."

Hallet was sensibly affected, but, without speaking, he turned to the desk, and took down his bankbook. In a few moments he handed me a check. It was for five thousand dollars. I took it, and, hesitating an instant, said:

Digitized by Google

"I will keep this, sir, not for myself, but for Frank. It may be of service to him at some future time."

"Keep it for yourself, sir, not for him. He will not need it. He shall share equally with my other children."

"I am glad to see this spirit in you. Frank will be worthy of all you do for him."

"It is not for *his* sake that I will do it," replied Hallet, his voice tremulous with emotion; "it is that I may have the forgiveness of the one I—I—" He said no more, but, leaning his head on his hand, he wept!

No one spoke for some minutes; at last David rose, and, handing me one of the papers, laid the other before Hallet.

"This appears right," I said, after reading it over carefully.

"Yes," replied Hallet, taking up a pen and signing the other. Passing it to me, he added: "Keep them both—take them now."

"But Frank may not wish to come."

"Then I will find some other way of helping him. He is my son! Take the papers."

"Well, as you say," I replied. "David, please to witness this."

Hallet pressed me to pass the night at his house, but I declined, and rode out to Cambridge with the old bookkeeper. With many injunctions to watch carefully over Frank, I left him about twelve o'clock, rode into town with Cragin, and the next morning started for New York.

That night, as I recounted the interview to Kate, I said:

Digitized by Google

"I never did believe in these double-quick conversions; but Hallet *is* an altered man."

"Then, indeed, can the leopard change his spots."

As usual, her womanly intuitions were right; my worldly wisdom was wrong!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI.

SELMA.

Not long after the events I have just related, the mail brought me the following letter from Preston:

"My very dear Friend: Circumstances, which I cannot explain by letter, render it *imperatively* necessary that I should provide another home for my daughter. Her education has been sadly neglected, and she should be where she can have experienced tutors, and good social surroundings. With her delicate organization, and sensitive and susceptible nature, she needs *motherly* care and affection, and I shrink from committing her to the hands of strangers. I should feel at rest about her only with *you*. You have been my steadfast friend through many years; you have stood by me in sore trials; may I not, then, ask you to do me now a greater service than you have ever done, by receiving my little daughter into your family? I know this is an unusual, almost presumptuous request; but if you knew her as she is—gentle, loving, obedient—the light and joy of all about her, I am sure you, and your excellent lady, would love her, and be willing to make her the companion of your children. She is my only earthly comfort, and it will rend my heart to part with her, but—I *must*.

Digitized by Google

"Write me at once. You are yourself a father—*do not refuse me.*"

To this, on the next day, I sent the following reply:

"MY DEAR FRIEND: I would most cheerfully take your daughter into my family, did my wife's health, which has been failing all the summer, admit of her assuming any additional care.

"I think, however, I can provide Selma with a home equally as good as my own; one where good influences will be about her, and she will have the best educational advantages. I refer to the family of Mr. David Gray, of Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was my father's friend. The years I was a boy with Russell, Rollins & Co., I was an inmate of his house; and my adopted son, Frank, is now in his care. His daughter Alice is a most suitable person to have charge of a young girl. She is like a sister to me, and, to oblige me, would no doubt take Selma.

"Please advise me of your wishes; and believe, my dear friend, I will do all in my power to serve you."

I was sitting down at supper, one evening, about a fortnight after sending this letter, when a gentleman was announced as wishing to see me. I rose, and went into the parlor. It was Preston, and with him was Selma, then a beautiful little girl of about eleven years.

Asking Preston to lay aside his outside coat, I was struck by his altered appearance. It was four years since we had met, but, looking at him, I imagined it might be ten. His

Digitized by Google

eyes were sunken, deep furrows were about his mouth, and his brown hair was thickly streaked with gray.

"My dear friend," I exclaimed, as I grasped his hand a second time, "you are not well!"

"I am as well as usual, Kirke. Time has not done this!"

Fatigued with the long journey, Selma had retired, and our own little ones were in bed, when Kate joined us in the parlor.

"You *do* look ill, Mr. Preston," she said, seating herself beside him. "You must stay a while with us, and rest."

"I would be glad to stay here, madam—anywhere away from home."

"The care of two plantations, such as yours, must be a burden."

"It is not that, madam; Joe relieves me entirely from oversight of one of them. My difficulty is at home—it is not what yours is."

Kate's sympathizing words soon drew him out (she has a way of winning the confidence of people, and is the depositary of more family secrets than any other woman in the State); and he told us what his home had become since his union with the governess.

Within two months after the marriage her real character began to display itself, and she soon developed into a genuine Xantippe. Getting control of Mulock, who had been made overseer, she had the negroes dreadfully whipped and overworked; she treated young master Joe so badly that the lad rebelled, and, in his father's absence, ran away to his uncle at Mobile; and locking Selma up in a dark room, without food, or beating her till her back was actually discolored, she made the child's home intolérable to her.

Digitized by Google

After master Joe went away, no one dared complain; and shut up in his library, brooding over his still fresh grief for the death of his wife, Preston knew nothing of the real state of affairs till more than a year had elapsed. Then, one day, he found Selma in tears. He questioned her, and learned the whole. A scene followed, in which Mrs. Preston asserted her rights as mistress of the plantation, and defied him. She had run into all sorts of extravagance; the yearly bills, which had come in a short time previous, were appallingly large, but, to secure peace, Preston consented to buy and furnish a winter residence at Newbern. To that she had removed; but, with the coming spring, she would return to the plantation, and in the mean time Selma must be provided with another home.

"Feel no anxiety about her, sir," said Kate, as he concluded; "if Alice Gray will not take her, we will."

"I thank you, madam; I cannot thank you enough for saying that," replied Preston, his eyes filling with tears.

I wrote at once to David, and soon received a letter from Alice consenting to take charge of the little girl. Thanksgiving, at which time Kate made annual visits to her early home, was approaching, and it was decided that Selma should accompany her to Boston.

This being arranged, Preston, at the end of a fortnight, took leave of us, and returned to the South. The parting between the father and the child gave evidence of what they were to each other. Preston wept like a woman; but as Kate brushed back the brown curls from the broad forehead of little Selly, she raised her eyes to my wife's face, and, while her thin nostrils dilated, and her sensitive chin slightly quivered, said:

"I must not cry, for poor papa's sake—it is so *very* hard

Digitized by Google

for him to go home alone; and he will miss his little girl *so* much."

"You are right, dear child," said Kate; and, as if looking into the far future of the woman, and feeling that such a nature must suffer as well as enjoy keenly, she inwardly thanked God that, with her delicate organization, He had given her the unselfish and brave heart which those words expressed.

* * * * * * *

Four years had wrought great changes in David's quiet home. Alice had become Mrs. Augustus Cragin, and a little Alice tottled about the floor; but after supper, David still found his evening cigar on the oak stand, his needlework slippers—wrought by Alice's own hand—in their place before the fender, and his large armchair rolled up close to the gas burner in the little back parlor at Cambridge.

Frank was twenty, and had fulfilled the promise of his boyhood. His father, after the honeymoon of his repentance was over, showed no great interest in him; but Cragin, who knew nothing of my arrangement with Hallet, had given him all the advantages in his power.

Selma was only fifteen, but, like the flowers of her own South, she had blossomed early, and was already a woman. Preston had visited her every summer, but she never returned with him, having preferred passing her vacations at my house.

In David's loving household nothing had occurred to disturb her peaceful life. Beloved by her teachers and schoolmates, she everywhere received the homage due to her beauty and her goodness; and in the gay world into which her joyous nature often led her, she was the acknowledged and *unenvied* queen! Her father had spared no pains in her education; the

Digitized by Google

best tutors had trained her fine ear and sweet voice, and taught her to give form and coloring to the pictures her glowing imagination created; and, whether her fingers ran over the keys of a musical instrument, or wielded the brush, there was a delicacy and yet *spirit* in her touch, which were the wonder and admiration of all.

I was not surprised, when visiting Boston about this time, to have Frank tell me that he loved her, and ask my consent to his regarding her as his future wife.

* * * * * *

Kate and I were to leave for home on the following day, and, calling at the office in the afternoon, I said to Frank:

"I have tickets for the opera, including Selma; of course you'd like to have her go."

"Yes, father; she has never been, and I have promised to take her this winter. She'll be able, now, to appreciate it."

The box I had selected was at a happy distance from the stage, and we gave Selma a front seat, that she might see to the best advantage. She was in high spirits; indeed, she was radiant in her beauty. She wore a dark blue dress of silk, fitting closely to her neck, and its short sleeves allowed the plump, fair arms to half disclose themselves from beneath the scarlet mantle which fell around her shoulders. Her hair fell over her neck in the same simple fashion as in her childhood, except that the thick curls, which had lost their golden tint, and were darker and longer, were looped back from her broad forehead, with a few simple flowers. There was the same contour of face and feature, but ennobled by thought and culture; the same sensitive mouth, only that the lips were fuller, and of a deeper color; and, as she talked or listened, the same rose tint

Digitized by Google

deepened and faded beneath her rich, soft, dark skin, as sunlight shifts and fades across the evening sky. Her eyes, in whose dark depths the soul was reflected, met a stranger's calmly, but took a soft look of loving trust when meeting Frank's. They were shaded by long lashes, as black as the night; and when the lids fell suddenly, as they often did, and her face became quiet, and almost sad, you felt that she was communing with the angels.

The overture burst forth, and, with glowing face, and eyes fixed upon the stage, Selma seemed lost to all but the enrapturing sounds; even Frank's whispered words were unheeded. As the opera—"Lucia di Lammermoor"—proceeded, I saw that every eye was attracted to our box, and, bending forward to catch Selma's expression, I called Kate's attention to her. With her head thrown slightly back, a bright spot burning on either cheek, her breath suspended, the large tears coursing from her eyes, and motionless as a statue, she sat with her small hands clasped on the front of the box, as if entranced, and all unconscious of the hundred eyes that were fixed upon her. I thought of the pictures I had seen in the old galleries of Europe, but I said, "Surely, art cannot equal nature!"

When it was over, she took Frank's arm. I turned to question her, but Kate said:

"Let her alone; she cannot talk now."

* * * * * *

The transactions of Russell, Rollins & Co. extended the world over; but, since the death of Mr. Rollins, which occurred prior to Frank's going with them, they had cultivated particularly the Southern trade, and their operations in cotton had grown to be enormous. They bought largely of that

Digitized by Google

staple on their own account, and for some extensive manufacturing establishments in England. Their purchases were chiefly made in New Orleans, and, to attend to this business, Hallet had passed the winters in that city for several years.

His wealth had grown rapidly, and, at the date of which I am writing, he ranked among the "solid men" of Boston Cragin was not nearly so wealthy. Being on intimate terms with the latter, I remarked, as we were enjoying a cigar together one evening at David's, on the occasion of the visit to which I have referred in the this chapter:

"How is it, Cragin, that you pass for only a hundred thousand, when Hallet is rated nearly a million?"

"Because, Ned, I'm not worth more."

"But how is that, when you have two fifths of the concern?"

"Well, Hallet went into cotton like the devil some ten years ago; and I told him I wouldn't stand it. I like to feel the ground under me. Since then he has speculated on his own account; he and old Roye go it strong, and I guess they've made some pretty heavy lifts."

"That's uncertain business."

"Yes, devilish uncertain; but, somehow, they manage always to hold winning cards. Hallet has told me his New Orleans operations have netted him four hundred thousand."

"And that, with what he got by his wife, has rolled him into a millionaire before he's forty-five! He's a lucky fellow."

"Lucky! I wouldn't stand in his boots. What goes up, *may* come down. He has no peace. His wife's a hyena. She makes home too hot for him; and, somehow, he's never easy. He walks about as if treading on torpedoes."

Digitized by Google

"If you dislike speculation, why not increase your legitimate business?"

"Hallet's away so much, I can't. I'm glued to the old office. I ought to have been in Europe half of the time the last three years, but I haven't been able to get away."

"Why not send Frank? He's old enough now."

"I mean to, in the spring; and I'm d—d if he sha'n't be a partner soon, and take some of this load off my shoulders. But do you know that Hallet has a decided dislike to him?"

"No! On what account?" I exclaimed. I had met Hallet only twice during four years, but on both occasions he had spoken favorably of his son. Frank himself had never alluded in other than respectful terms to his father.

"Well, I don't know, and it makes no difference. I'm captain at this end of the towline; and I swear he shall go in."

"As you feel so kindly toward Frank, I'll give him a chance to conciliate Hallet. I'll take him South, this winter, and introduce him to our correspondents. With his address he ought to do something with them. Will you let him go?"

"Yes, and be right down glad to have him. When do you start?"

"About the middle of December."

A fortnight afterward, with Selma and Frank, I again visited Preston's plantation.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

A PLANTATION CHRISTMAS.

It was Christmas morning when we rode up the long, winding avenue, and halted before the doorway of "Forest Lake"—the new name which the Yankee schoolmistress, aping the custom of her Yankee cousins, had bestowed on Preston's plantation. The day was mild and sunshiny, and the whole population of the little patriarchate was gathered on the green in front of the mansion, distributing Christmas presents among the negroes. When we came in sight, from behind the thick cluster of liveoaks which bordered the miniature lake, the whole assemblage sent up a glad shout, and hurried up to welcome us. And such a welcome! As she sprang from the carriage, Selma was caught in her father's arms, then in "master Joe's," and then, encircled by a cloud of dark beauties, each vieing with the other in boisterous expressions of affection, she was the victim of such a demonstration as would have done the heart of Hogarth good to witness. In the midst of it a slight, delicate woman rushed from the house, and, crowding into the thick group around Selma, threw her arms about her neck, and, nearly smothering her with kisses, exclaimed:

"My chile! my chile! I sees you at last!"

Digitized by Google

"Yes, Phylly," said Selma, returning her caresses; "and haven't I grown? I thought you wouldn't know me."

"Know you! Ain't you my chile—my own dear chile!" and, pressing Selma's cheeks between her two hands, and gazing at her beautiful face for a moment, she kissed her over and over again.

My arms had been nearly shaken off, when I noticed "Boss Joe" limping toward me, his head uncovered, and his broad face shining from out his gray wool like the full moon breaking through a mass of clouds.

"How are you, old gentleman?" I exclaimed, grasping him warmly by the hand.

"Right smart! right smart, massa Kirke. Glad you'm come, sar."

"And you're home for Christmas?"

"Yas, sar. I'se come ter see massa Robert, an' ter tend ter hirin' a new gang. But darkies am high dis yar, sar."

"How much are they?"

"Well, dey ax, roun' yere, one fifty, an' 'spenses dar an' back; an' it'm a pile, when you tink we hab used up 'most all de new trees."

"But you must have many second-year cuttings."

"Yas, right smart; but No. 2 rosum doan't pay at sech prices fur darkies."

Turning to Preston in a moment, I said:

"Do not let us interfere with the 'doin's'; it's just what we want to see."

"Well, come, you folks," said Joe, hobbling back to the green; "leff us gwo on now."

Preston, Selma, and Phyllis went into the house, but the

Digitized by Google

rest of us followed the grinning group of Africans to the centre of the lawn, where several large packing boxes, and a long table, something like a carpenter's bench, were piled high with a miscellaneous assortment of dry goods and groceries.

"Now, all you dat hab heads, come up yere," shouted Joe, seating himself on the bench; "but doan't all come ter onst."

One by one the men and boys filed past him, and, selecting a hat or cap from a couple of boxes near, he adjusted a covering to each woolly cranium that presented itself; interspersing the exercise with humorous remarks on their respective phrenological developments:

"Pomp, you's made fur a preacher, shore. Dat dar head ob your'n gwoes up jess like a steeple. I'll hab ter gib you a cap, Dave; you'm so big ahind de yeres, none ob dese hats'll fit, nohow. Jess show de back ob you' head to ony gemman, an' he'll say you'm one ob de great ones ob de 'arth. None ob dese am big 'nuff fur you, Ally," he continued, as a tall, well-clad mulatto man stepped up to him. "You' bumps hab growed so sence you took ter de swamp, dat nuffin'll cober you 'cept massa Robert's hat, or de gal Rosey's sunshade."

The yellow man laughed, but kept on trying the hats. Finding one, at last, of suitable dimensions, he turned away to make room for another candidate for cranial honors. As I caught a full view of his face, I exclaimed:

"Why, Ally, is that you?"

"Yas, massa; it'm me," he replied, making a respectful bow.

"And you live here yet?"

"Yas, massa. Hope you's well, massa?"

"Very well. And your mother—how is she?"

Digitized by Google

"Oh! she'm right smart, sar."

"Yas, massa, I'se right smart; an' I'se bery glad ter see 'ou, massa," said a voice at my elbow. It was Dinah, no longer clad in coarse osnaburg, but arrayed in a worsted gown, and a little grayer and a little bulkier than when I saw her eight years before.

"Why, Dinah, how well you look!" I exclaimed, giving her my hand. "And you've come up to spend Christmas with Ally?"

"No, massa, I *libs* yere. I'se FREE now, massa!"

"Free! So you've made enough to buy yourself? I'm glad to hear it."

"No, massa. Ally—de good chile—he done it, massa."

"Ally did it! How could he? He's not more than twenty now!"

"No more'n he hain't, massa; but he'm two yar in massa Preston's swamp, wid a hired gang. Massa Preston put de chile ober 'em, an' gib him a haff ob all he make, an' he'm doin' a heap dar, massa."

"And with his first earnings he bought his mother!"

"Yas, massa; wid de bery fuss."

"Ally, give me your hand," I exclaimed, with unaffected pleasure; "you're a man! You're worthy of such a mother!"

"Yas, he am dat, massa! He'm wordy ob onyting; an' he'm gwine ter hab a wife ter day, massa. Boss Joe am gwine ter marry 'em, an' ter gib 'em him own cabin fur dar Chrismus giff."

"Well, Joe *is* a trump. I'll remember him in my will for that, aunty, sure."

"Dat'm bery good ob 'ou, massa; but I reckon 'ou can't

Digitized by Google

tink who Ally'm gwine ter hab, massa," said the old woman, her face beaming all over.

"No, I can't, Dinah. Who is she?"

"It'm little Rosey, dat 'ou buy ob de trader, massa; an' she'm de pootiest little gal all roun' yere; ebery one say dat, massa."

"Indeed! And they are to be married to-day?"

"Yas, massa, ter day—dis evenin'. 'Ou'll be dar, woan't 'ou, massa?"

"Yes, certainly I will."

The old woman and Ally then mingled with the crowd of negroes, and I turned my attention once more to Joe's operations. The men had been supplied with head gear, and the women were receiving their turbans—gaudy pieces of red and yellow muslin.

"Now, all you boys an' gals," shouted Joe, as he dealt out a handkerchief to the last of the dusky demoiselles, "you all squat on de groun', an' shovel off you' shoes."

Down they went in every conceivable attitude, and, uncovering their feet, commenced pelting each other with the cast-off leathers. When the sport had lasted a few minutes, Joe sang out:

"Come! 'nuff ob dat; now ter bis'ness. Yere, you yaller monkeys" (to several amalgamated specimens of white lead and Spanish brown), "tote dese 'mong 'em."

The young chattels did as they were bidden, and, as each heavy brogan was fitted to the pedal extremity of some one of the darkies, the newly-shod individual sprang to his feet, and commenced dancing about as if he were the happiest mortal in existence.

Digitized by Google

"Dat'm it," shouted Joe; "frow up you' heels; an' some ob you gwo an' fotch de big fiddle. We'll hab a dance, an' show dese Nordern gemmen de raal poker."

"But we hain't hed de dresses—nor de soogar—nor de 'backer—nor none ob de whiskey," cried a dozen voices.

"Shet up, you brack crows! You can't hab anoder ting till ye'se hed a high ole heel-scrapin'. Yere, massa Joe; you come up yere, an' holp me wid de 'strumentals," said Boss Joe grinning widely, and getting up on the carpenter's bench.

In a few moments, the "big fiddle," one or two smaller fiddles, and three or four banjoes were brought out, and the two Joes, and several ebony gentlemen, seating themselves on the boxes of clothing, began tuning the instruments. Soon "Boss Joe" commenced sawing away with a gusto that might have been considered out of keeping with his gray hairs, his sixty years, and his clerical profession. "Massa Joe" and the others striking in, the male and female darkies paired off two by two, and to a lively air began dancing a sort of "cotillion breakdown." Other dances followed, in which the little negroes joined, and soon the air rang with the creak of the fiddles and the merry shouts of the negroes. In the midst of it my arm was touched lightly, and, turning round, I saw Rosey and Dinah.

"I'se got de little gal yere, massa," said the latter, looking as proud as a hen over her first brood of chickens. "She glad ter see 'ou, massa."

I gave Rosey my hand, and made a few good-natured compliments on her beauty and her tidy appearance. She had a simple, guileless expression, and met my half-bantering remarks with an innocent frankness that charmed me. She was only

Digitized by Google

sixteen, but had developed into a beautiful woman. Her form was slight and graceful, with just enough *embonpoint* to give the appearance of full health; and her thin, delicate features, large, wide-set eyes, and clear, rosy complexion, bore a strong resemblance to Selma's. It was evident they were children of the same father; and yet, one was to be the wife of a poor negro, the other to marry the son of a "merchant prince."

As the dancing concluded, Boss Joe's fiddle gave out a dying scream, and, turning to me, he sang out:

"War dar eber sprightlier nigs dan dese, massa Kirke? Doan't dey beat you' country folks all holler?"

"Yes, they do, Joe. They handle their heels as nimbly as elephants."

I spoke the truth; most of them did.

The distribution of the presents was resumed; and, as each negro received his full supply of flour, sugar, tea, coffee, molasses, tobacco, and calico, grinning with joy over his new acquisitions, he staggered off to his quarters. When the last box was nearly emptied, with young Preston and Frank, I adjourned to the mansion.

The exterior of the "great house" was unchanged, but its interior had undergone a complete transformation. The plain oak flooring of the hall had been replaced by porcelain tiling, and the neat, simple furniture of the parlors by huge mirrors; rosewood and brocatelle sofas and lounges; velvet tapestry carpets, in which one's feet sank almost out of sight; and immense paintings, whose aggregate cost might have paid off one half of the mortgage that encumbered the plantation.

Selma and her father were engaged in earnest conversation when we entered the drawing room, and, being unwill-

Digitized by Google

ing to interrupt them, I was about to retire, but he rose, and said:

"Come in, Kirke; I will call Mrs. Preston. She will be glad to see you."

The lady soon entered. It was eight years since we had met, but time had touched her gently. Her face wore its old, decided, yet quiet expression, and her manner showed the easy self-possession I had noticed at our first interview. She was richly dressed, and had on a heavy satin pelisse, and a blue velvet bonnet, as if about to ride out.

When the usual greetings were over, she remarked:

"You have been here some time, sir?"

"Yes, madam; we arrived about two hours ago; but I met some old friends outside, and the pleasure of seeing them has made me a little tardy in paying my respects to you."

"The negroes, you mean, sir," she replied, with a slight toss of the head, and a look of cool dignity which well became her.

"Yes, madam; I have many friends among the blacks. On some plantations they look for my coming as they do for Christmas."

"It is quite rare to meet a white gentleman so fond of negroes," she rejoined, with an air slightly more supercilious.

I remembered her as the humble schoolmistress, whose entire possessions were packed in one trunk; and, forgetting myself, said, in a tone which bore a slight trace of indignation:

"More rare, I fear, than it should be; but you and I, madam, who are Yankees, and have 'worked for a living,' cannot surely despise the negroes because they are *compelled* to work for theirs."

Digitized by Google

"Oh! no, sir; not by any means! But you must excuse me; the carriage is waiting to take me to church;" and, rising, she bowed herself stiffly out of the door.

"Ah, you hit her there!" exclaimed Joe, springing to his feet in great glee, and striding to the window. "See here, Mr. Kirke! See what a turnout the Yankee 'schulemarm' has worried out of father!"

"My son, you must not speak so; she is your mother!" said Preston.

"No, I'm d—d if she is! Call her anything but that, father; that's——" He checked himself; but I thought he would have added, "an insult to my dead mother!"

Preston made no reply.

Looking out of the window, I saw Mrs. Preston being handed into a magnificent barouche by one of the black gentry she so much despised. Another, in gaudy gold livery, sat on the box; and a mounted outrider, also bound up in gold braid, stood behind the carriage.

"There's a two-thousand-dollar turnout, and two fifteen-hundred-dollar niggers to tote a woman who ought to go afoot. It's a poor investment, I swear," said Joe, turning away from the window.

Preston made no reply; but I laughingly remarked:

"Come, Joe, she isn't *your* wife. Let your father spend his money as he pleases; he can afford it."

"He *can't* afford it; that woman is running him to the devil at a two-forty gait. You have more influence with him than any one, Mr. Kirke; *do* try to stop it!"

The young man spoke in a decided but regretful tone, and his manner showed more respect to his father than his words

Digitized by Google

implied. Unwilling to interfere in such an affair, I said nothing; but Preston, in a moment, remarked:

"It is true, Kirke! Her extravagance has ruined my credit at home, and forced me to use Joe's indorsements. Besides, I have had to borrow ten thousand dollars of him to keep my head above water."

[Mr. James Preston—the Squire's uncle—had died the year before, and the young man had succeeded to his large property and business.]

I was thunderstruck; but, before I could reply, Joe said:

"I don't care a rush for the money. Father can have every dollar I've got; but I *do* want to see him rid of that woman. I've been here sick for two months, and I've seen the whole. She is worrying the very life out of him. She's made him an old man at forty."

It was true. His face was lean and haggard, and his hair already thickly streaked with white.

Preston rose, and, walking the room, said:

"But what am I to do? You yourself, Joe, would not have all this made public. You've as much pride about it as I have."

"I've not a bit of pride about it, father; and it's public now. Everybody knows it, and everybody says you ought to cut her adrift."

"What had I better do? Tell me, my friend," said Preston, still walking the room.

"I cannot advise you, Preston. An outsider should express no opinion on such matters."

In a moment, Preston said:

Digitized by Google

"Well, Joe, no more of this now. I'll do what is right, however much it may wound my pride."

The conversation turned to other subjects, till Mrs. Preston's return from church, shortly after which dinner was announced. The lady presided at the table with as much ease and grace as if she had been born to the position; and, in her charming conversation, I almost forgot the revelations of the morning. The rest of the day I spent with Joe and Frank, strolling over the plantation, and mingling with the negroes, who, freed from work, were enjoying themselves in a very "miscellaneous manner." Preston remained at the house with Selma.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII.

FAMILY JARS.

It was nearly dark when we returned to the mansion. Looking in at the parlor, and not finding his father there, Joe led the way at once to the library. The door was ajar, and, as we entered the passage way, loud voices were issuing from it.

"I tell you, Mr. Preston, I am mistress of this plantation. He shall NOT go!"

"Pardon me, madam, he *shall*, and to-night," returned a mild but decided voice, which I recognized as Preston's. Being unwilling to overhear more, I turned away, but Joe caught me by the arm, exclaiming:

"If you are my father's friend, go in. If you don't, he will back down; he has done so forty times."

Preston was a man of more than ordinary firmness, but his wife had the stronger will. She seemed possessed of a sort of magnetic power, which enabled her to control others almost arbitrarily.

Reluctantly I followed the young man into the room. Preston was seated before the fire, and Selma, with her arm about his neck, was standing near him. Mulock, better clad than when I witnessed his purchase by the "fast" young planter, but wearing a sullen, dogged expression, was leaning

Digitized by Google

against the centre table; and Mrs. Preston, gesticulating wildly, and her face glowing with mingled rage and defiance, stood within a few feet of her husband. Not heeding our entrance, she exclaimed:

"I *will* have my way. If you send him off, I will never darken your doors again."

"That is as you please, madam," replied Preston. "Mr. Kirke and Frank, pray be seated."

Stung by her husband's coolness, the lady turned fiercely upon Joe, and, shaking her clenched hand in his face, cried out:

"This is *your* work. I will teach you better than to meddle in my affairs."

"Madam, you act well," said the young man, taking a step toward the door. "Pray come out to the quarters; poor as they are, every negro will give a bit to see *you* play."

In uncontrollable rage, she struck him a smart blow in the face, and rushed from the room.

When she had gone, Preston turned to Mulock:

"Now go. The amount due you I shall retain to offset, in part, what you have tempted the negroes to steal. You can come here once a week—on Sunday—to see Phylly; but if you have any more dealings with the hands, I will prosecute you on the instant."

Mulock rose, put on his slouched hat, and, a dull fire burning in his cold, snakelike eyes, slowly said:

"Wall, Squire, I'll gwo; but 'counts 'tween you an' me ain't settled yit."

As he went, Selma leaned forward, and, kissing Preston's cheek, said:

Digitized by Google

"O father! I'm so glad *you* didn't speak harshly to her."

Preston put his arm about her, and replied:

"You helped me, my child. I should be a better, happier man, if you were with me."

"And I will be, father; I won't go away any more."

"But Frank?" said Preston, again kissing her.

"Oh! you know we're not to be married for a good while yet. I'll stay with you *till then*, father."

"Ah! there she goes," said Joe, looking out at the window, which commanded a view of the *porte cochére;* "she can't get to Newbern till ten; but the night air won't hurt *her*."

"Then she makes Newbern her home?"

"Yes, she spends the winters there; she came here only yesterday."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NEGRO WEDDING.

Ally and Rosey were to be married* in the little church; and, directly after supper, we all went to the wedding. The seats had been removed from the centre of the building, for, though duly consecrated to the use of the saints, the sinners were to exercise their heels in it after the ceremony was over. At its farther extremity, the carpenter's bench of which I have spoken, elongated at both ends, and covered with a white table cloth, was piled high with eatables; indicating that a time of "great refreshment" was at hand. The bounteous supply of ham, chicken, wild duck, roast pig, fish, hoecake, wheat bread, tea, coffee, milk, and pumpkin and sweet-potato pies, under which the bench groaned, showed that some liberal hand had catered for the occasion.

Black Joe, dressed in his "Sunday best," was seated on the rustic settee at the back of the desk, and Phyllis and Dinah occupied chairs inside the low railing which faced the pulpit. Phyllis looked careworn and sad, but Ally's mother was as radiant as a brass kettle in a blaze of light wood. She wore a

* Usually there is no marriage ceremony performed at the union of slaves. They simply agree, tacitly or otherwise, to live together till death or their master parts them.

Digitized by Google

white dress, stiffly starched, and expanded by immense hoops, and a crimped nightcap, whose broad border flapped about like the wings of a crowing rooster; and she looked, for all the world, like a black ghost in a winding sheet, escaped from below, and bound on a "good time generally." Two "shining lights," on either side of the pulpit, held aloft blazing torches of pine, illuminating the sea of grinning darkness, and sending up a smoke like that arising from the pit which is said to be bottomless. About a hundred darkies were present; and the number of glossy coats, fancy turbans, gaudy bonnets, red shawls, and flaming dresses, which the light disclosed, was amazing. The poor worm that grubbed in the earth had appeared ("for that occasion only") as a butterfly; and Lazarus, rid of his rags, had come forth dressed like a Broadway dandy.

Any person of sensitive olfactories would have halted in the doorway; but I elbowed through the woolly gathering, and followed Frank and Selma to the family pew. Tittering, laughing, and flaunting their red and yellow kerchiefs, the black people were enjoying themselves amazingly, when "Dar dey comes," "Dar'm de happy pussons," went round the assemblage, and the bride and groom, attended by two sable couples, entered the building. After some ludicrous mistakes, they got "into position" in front of the railing, and Black Joe took a stand before them.

Rosey was dressed in white, with a neat fillet of pink and blue ribbon about her head; and Ally wore a black frock coat, with white vest, and white cotton gloves. One of the groomsmen—a rustic beau from a neighboring plantation—wore an immensely long-tailed blue coat with brass buttons, a flaming

Digitized by Google

red waistcoat, yellow woollen mittens, and a neckerchief that looked like a secession flag hugging a lamppost. Both of these gentry had hats of stovepipe pattern, very tall, and with narrow brims; and—they wore them during the ceremony.

"Silence in de meetin'," cried Joe.

The boisterous sea of black wool subsided to a dead calm. Those not already standing, rose, and Joe commenced reading the marriage service of the Episcopal Church.

The parties immediately interested appeared to have conned their lessons well, for they made all the responses with great propriety; but some of the congregation seemed less familiar with the service. When Joe repeated the words, "If ony man kin show cause why dese folks should not be lawfully jined togedder, leff him now speak, or else foreber hole his peace," Dinah turned to the audience, and cried out:

"Yas, jess leff him come out wid it *now*. I'd like ter see de man dat's got onyting agin it."

No one appeared to have "onyting agin it," and Joe proceeded to read the words: "I require and charge you, if either of you know any impediment," etc. In the midst of it, a voice called out:

"Dar ain't no 'pedimen', Boss Joe; I knows dat. Gwo on, sar!" "Dat's so, brudder," said another voice. "Dat's de Lord's trufh," echoed a third. "Doan't be 'sturbin' de meetin'; de young folks want de splicin' done," cried a fourth; and "Amen," shouted a dozen.

"Shet up, all on you!" yelled Joe, turning on them with an imperious gesture. "Ef you hain't no more manners dan dat, clar out."

Silence soon ensued, and Joe went on without interruption

Digitized by Google

to the place where the minister asks the bridegroom: "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" Then Dinah, unable to contain herself longer, joyfully exclaimed:

"Ob course he will! Ony youn' feller'd be glad to hab *har*."

[Never having gone through the ceremony herself, the poor woman could not be expected to know what was appropriate to the occasion.]

No further interruption occurred, and soon the happy couple were "bone of one bone, and flesh of one flesh." The assemblage still standing, Joe then turned to Ally and Rosey, and, with a manner so solemn and impressive that he seemed altogether a different person from the merry darky who had entered so heartily into the "high ole heel-scrapin'" of the morning, he spoke somewhat as follows:

"My chil'ren, lub one anoder; bar wid one anoder; be faithful ter one anoder. You hab started on a long journey, many rough places am in de road; many trubbles will spring up by de wayside; but gwo on hand an' hand togedder; lub one anoder, an', no matter what come onter you, you will be happy—fur lub will sweeten ebery sorrer, lighten ebery load, make de sun shine in eben de bery-cloudiest wedder. I knows it will, my chil'ren, 'case I'se been ober de groun'. Ole Aggy an' I hab trabbled de road. Hand in hand we hab gone ober de rocks; fru de mud; in de hot, burnin' sand; been out togedder in de cole, an' de rain, an' de storm, fur nigh onter forty yar, but we hab clung ter one anoder; we hab lub'd one anoder; an' fru eberyting, in de bery darkest days, de sun ob joy an' peace hab broke fru de clouds, an' sent him blessed rays inter our hearts. We started jess like two young saplin's

Digitized by Google

you's seed a growin' side by side in de woods. At fust we seemed 'way 'part, fur de brambles, an' de tick bushes, an' de ugly forns—dem war our bad ways—war atween us; but lub, like de sun, shone down on us, an' we grow'd. We grow'd till our heads got above de bushes; till dis little branch an' dat little branch—dem war our holy feelin's—put out toward one anoder, an' we come closer an' closer togedder. An' dough we'm ole trees now, an' sometime de wind blow, an' de storm rage fru de tops, an' freaten ter tear off de limbs, an' ter pull up de bery roots, we'm growin' closer an' closer, an' nearer an' nearer togedder ebery day. An' soon de ole tops will meet; soon de ole branches, all cobered ober wid de gray moss, will twine roun' one anoder; soon de two ole trees will come togedder, an' grow inter *one* foreber—grow inter one up dar in de sky, whar de wind neber'll blow, whar de storm neber'll beat; whar we shill blossom an' bar fruit ter de glory ob de Lord, an' in His heabenly kingdom foreber!

"Yas, my chil'ren, you hab started on a long journey, an' nuffin' will git you fru it but *lub*. Nuffin' will hole you up, nuffin' will keep you faithful ter one anoder, nuffin' will make you bar wid one anoder, but dat. None ob us kin lib widout it; but married folks want it most ob all. Dey need it more dan de bread dey eat, de water dey drink, or de air dey breafe. De worle couldn't gwo on widout it. De bery sun would gwo out in de heabens, but fur dat! An' shill I tell you why? You hab heerd massa Robert talk 'bout de great law dat make de apple fall from de tree, de rock sink in de water; dat bines our feet ter de roun' 'arth, so we doan't drap off as it gwo fru de air; dat holes de sun an' de stars in dar 'pointed places, so dat, day after day, an' yar after yar, dough dey'm trabblin'

Digitized by Google

fasser dan de lightnin' eber went, dey'm right whar dey should be. He call it 'traction, an' all de great men call it so; but dat ain't de name! It am LUB. It am GOD, fur GOD am lub, an' lub am GOD; an' lub bines de whole creashun togedder! An' shill I tell you how it do it? Does you see dis hand? how I open de fingers; how I shet'm up; how I rise de whole arm? Does you see dis foot, dat I does wid jess de same? Does you see dis whole body—how I make it, in a twinklin', do jess what I like? Now, what am it dat make my hand move, an' my whole body turn roun' so sudden, dat I'se only ter say, 'Do it,' an' it'm done? Why, it am ME. It'm *me*, dat libs up yere in de brain, an' sends my *will* fru ebery part—fru ebery siner, an' ebery muscle, an' ebery little jint, an' make'm all do jess what I like. Now, man am made in de image ob GOD, an' dis pore, weak ole body am a small pattern ob de whole creashun. Eberyting gwo on jess as *it* do. Eberyting am held togedder, an' moved 'bout, jess as *it* am; but it'm GOD dat move it, not me! He libs up dar in de sky —which am His brain—wid de stars fur His hands, de planets fur His feet, an' de whole univarse fur His body; an' He sends His will—which am lub—fru ebery part ob de whole, an' moves it 'bout, an' make it do jess as He likes. So you see it am my will, sent fru ebery muscle an' ebery little siner, dat moves my body; so it am *His* will, sent fru what de 'stronomers an' de poets call de heabenly ether, dat moves *His* body —which am de 'arth, an' de sun, an' de stars, an' you an' me, an' ebery libin' ting in all creashun! His will move 'em all; AN' HIS WILL AM LUB! An' doan't you see dat you can't do widout His lub? dat it am de bery breaf ob life? dat, ef it war tooken 'way from you, fur jess one moment, you'd drap

Digitized by Google

down, an' die, an' neber come ter life agin—no, not in dis worle, nor in any oder worle? It am so, my chil'ren; an' de more you hab ob dat lub, de happier you'll be; de more you'll lub one anoder; de easier you'll gwo fru you' life; de more joyfuller you'll meet you' deafh; de happier you'll be all fru de long, long ages dat'm comin' in de great Yereafter! Den, O my chil'ren! lub GOD—lub one anoder! You can't be happy widout you lub GOD; an' you can't lub Him widout you lub one anoder!"

When Joe concluded, he saluted the bride in a manner that many another sooty gentleman present would have been very glad to imitate, and then took a stand at the head of the supper table. An immense tureen, filled with steaming oysters, was soon brought in and placed before him, and, looking up, he said grace; thanking Him who feedeth the ravens for putting it into his master's heart to feed His other black creatures, the darkies present on that occasion. He asked for his master many a happy "Chrismus down yere," and an eternal "Chrismus in heaben," and he added: "An', knowin' dat Dou hatest long prayers, an' long faces, an' dose folks dat gwo 'bout grumblin', as ef Dy happy 'arth war nuffin' but a graveyard; leff us enjoy dis feast an' dis day as Dy true chil'ren—de chil'ren ob a good Fader, who am all joy an' all gladness; an', while we'm eatin' an' drinkin' an' dancin', may we make merry in our hearts ter *Dee*. Amen."

As he concluded, Preston stepped to his side, and, taking the big ladle from his hand, said:

"Stand aside, Joe; you have done enough work for to-night;" then, turning to "we white folks" in the family pew, he added: "If any man among you would be master, let him

Digitized by Google

now be the servant of all. Let him try his hand at the waiter business, and see if he can't throw these shady people into the *shade*."

"Massa Joe" and I went forward, and, tying the negroes' aprons about our waists, took appropriate places beside the table.

"Now all of you find seats," cried Preston; and, amid a hurricane of giggling and merry laughter, the black people seated themselves on the floor, on the platform, and on the row of benches ranged along the walls. Preston proceeded to fill up the bowls with the savory stew, and we dispensed the eatables among them, and for half an hour I witnessed as much enjoyment as often falls to the lot of black sinners in this "vale of tears."

"Now, ef dis doan't beat all!" exclaimed old Dinah, as I handed her a huge chunk of gingerbread; "ef 'ou ain't right smart at waitin', massa Kirke, I'd like ter know it."

"Keep dark, ole 'ooman," shouted Black Joe; "doan't you say nuffin' 'bout dat, or de traders'll hab a hole ob him. He'd sell fur a right likely hand, *shore*."

"I woan't do nuffin' *but* keep dark, Boss Joe," rejoined Dinah, grinning till her face opened from ear to ear. "I'll hab 'ou know, sar, dat nary ones but white ladies paints!"

"Good fur you, ole lady," cried the preacher. "After dat you'll gib me de pleasure ob your hand in de fuss dance."

"Ob course I will, *mister* Joe; an' ef 'ou'm tired ob de ole 'ooman, I'll gib 'ou my han' in anoder dance."

"No, you woan't; I doan't gwo fur second marridges," rejoined Joe, looking slyly at Preston; "dey ain't made in heaben."

Digitized by Google

"No more dey ain't," said the old woman, heaving a long sigh, and also looking at Preston.

"You ain't a gwine ter leff dese folks dance in de church, am you, Boss Joe?" asked a prim, demure-looking darky, in a black suit, with a white neckerchief and stiff shirt collar; probably some neighboring preacher.

"I reckon so," replied Joe, dryly.

"An' *I* reckons so, too, Mister I-scare-'ou-out (Iscariot)," cried the old negress. "Ain't de planets de Lord's feet, an' doan't dey dance? I reckons we ain't no better dan de Lord am an' ef He mobes him feet, 'ou'd better mobe 'our'n. *We* b'lieve in sarvin' HIM wid our han's, an' our feet, too; we does, Mister I-scare-'ou-out."

She did scare him out, for the "pious gemman" left suddenly.

When about all of the eatables had found their way down the cavernous—and ravenous—throats of the darkies, Boss Joe rose, and called out:

"Yere, you massa Joe, you pull off you' apern, an' take de big fiddle. I'm 'gaged fur de fuss dance."

Young Preston seated himself on the platform, and several sable gentlemen, with banjoes and fiddles, took places beside him.

"Now all you men folks s'lect you' pardners," cried the preacher, taking Dinah by the hand, and leading her out to the middle of the floor.

They all paired off, the fiddles broke into a merry tune, and soon the little church, which had so often echoed with the groans of the saints, shook with the heels of the sinners. When the first dance was over, Boss Joe again called out:

Digitized by Google

"Now, massa Joe, strike up de wal'z; Dinah an' I am gwine ter show dese folks some highfalutin dancin'."

The waltz struck up, and off they whirled. Dinah went into it as if she were working for pay; and as Joe held her closely in his arms, her wide hoops expanded till she looked like a topsail schooner scudding under bare poles.

While Joe was wiping the perspiration from his face, at the end of the waltz, an old negro entered, and whispered something in his ear. Joe's countenance fell, and, without saying a word, he left the room.

"Massa Joe," relinquishing the big fiddle, then took the floor with Rosey, and gave the audience a genuine breakdown. His heels bobbed about like balls at a cricket match, and Rosey's petticoats fluttered like the contents of a clothes line caught out in a hurricane. A better-looking couple were never seen in a ball room.

"He's a natural born darky," said his father, laughing; "he takes to dancing as a duck takes to water."

A general dance followed. In the midst of it the old negro who had called Joe out, again came in, and, making his way to where Preston and I were standing, he said, in a low tone:

"Massa Robert, ole Jack am dyin'; will 'ou come?"

"Dying!" exclaimed Preston. "Yes, I'll be there at once. Kirke, you remember the old man; come with me."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

A DEATHBED.

The moon and the stars were out, and the tall, dark pines cast long, gloomy shadows over the little rows of negro houses which formed the rearguard to Preston's mansion. They were nearly deserted. Not a solitary fire slumbered on the bare clay hearths, and not a single darky stood sentry over the loose pork and neglected hoecakes, or kept at bay the army of huge rats and prowling opossums which beleaguered the quarters. Silence—death's music—was over and around them. The noisy revelry of the dancers had died away in the distance, and even the hoarse song of the great trees had sunk to a low moan, as they stood, motionless and abashed, in the presence of the grim giant who knocks alike at the palace and the cottage gate.

A stray light glimmered through the logs of a low hut, far off in the woods, and, making our way to it, we entered. A bright fire lit up the interior, and on a rude cot, in one corner, lay the old preacher. His eyes were closed; a cold, clammy sweat was on his forehead—he was dying. One of his skeleton hands rested on the tattered coverlet, and his weazened face was half buried in a dilapidated pillow, whose ragged casing and protruding plumage bespoke it a relic of some departed white sleeper.

Digitized by Google

An old negress, with gray hair and haggard visage, sat at the foot of the bed, wailing piteously; and Joe and half a dozen aged saints stood around, singing a hymn, doleful enough to have made even a sinner weep.

Not heeding our entrance, Joe took the dying man by the hand, and, in a slow, solemn voice, said:

"Brudder Jack, you'm dyin'; you'm gwine ter dat lan' whence no trabeller returns; you'm settin' out fur dat country which'm lit by de smile ob de Lord; whar dar ain't no sickness, no pain, no sorrer, no dyin'; fur dat kingdom whar de Lord reigns; whar truth flows on like a riber; whar righteousness springs up like de grass, an' lub draps down like de dew, an' cobers de face ob de groun'; whar you woan't gwo 'bout wid no crutch; whar you woan't lib in no ole cabin like dis, an' eat hoecake an' salt pork in sorrer an' heabiness ob soul; but whar you'll run an' not be weary, an' walk an' not be faint; whar you'll hab a hous'n builded ob de Lord, an' sit at His table—you' meat an' drink de bread an' de water ob life!

"I knows you's a sinner, Jack; I knows you's lub'd de hot water too much, an' dat it make you forgit you' duty sometime, an' set a bad 'zample ter dem as looked up ter you fur better tings; but dar am mercy wid de Lord, Jack; dar am forgibness wid Him; an' I hopes you'm ready an' willin' ter gwo."

Old Jack opened his eyes, and, in a low, peevish tone, said:

"Joe, none ob you' nonsense ter me! I'se hard you talk dis way afore. *You* can't preach—you neber could. You jess knows I ain't fit ter trabble, an' I ain't willin' ter gwo, nowhar."

Digitized by Google

Joe mildly rebuked him, and again commenced expatiating on the "upper kingdom," and on the glories of "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" but the old darky cut him short, with—

"Shet up, Joe! no more ob dat. I doan't want no oder hous'n but dis—dis ole cabin am good 'nuff fur me."

Joe was about to reply, when Preston stepped to the bedside, and, taking the aged preacher's hand, said:

"My good Jack, master Robert has come to see you."

The dying man turned his eyes toward his master, and, in a weak, tremulous voice, exclaimed:

"Oh! massa Robert, has *you* come? has you come ter see ole Jack? Bress you, massa Robert, bress you! Jack know'd you'd neber leab him yere ter die alone."

"No, my good Jack; I would save you, if I could."

"But you can't sabe me, massa Robert; I'se b'yond dat. I'se dyin', massa Robert. I'se gwine ter de good missus. She tell'd me ter git ready ter foller har, an' I is. I'se gwine ter har now, massa Robert!"

"I know you are, Jack. I feel *sure* you are."

"Tank you, massa Robert — tank you fur sayin' dat. An' woan't you pray fur me, massa Robert — jess a little pray? De good man's prayer am h'ard, you knows, massa Robert!"

All kneeling down on the rough floor, Preston prayed—a short, simple, fervent prayer. At its close, he rose, and, bending over the old negro, said:

"The Lord is good, Jack; His mercy is everlasting."

"I knows dat; I feels dat," gasped the dying man. "I lubs you, massa Robert; I allers lub'd you; but I'se gwine ter

Digitized by Google

leab you now. Bress you! de Lord bress you, massa Robert! I'll tell de good missus——"

He clutched convulsively at his master's hand; a wild light came out of his eyes; a sudden spasm passed over his face, and—he was "gone whar de good darkies go."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXI.

SOUTHERN CHIVALRY.

On the following day, Frank and I were to resume our journey; and, in the morning, I suggested that we should visit Colonel Dawsey, with whom, though he had for many years been a correspondent of the house in which I was a partner, I had no personal acquaintance.

His plantation adjoined Preston's, and his house was only a short half mile from my friend's. After breakfast, we set out for it through the woods. The day was cold for the season, with a sharp, nipping air, and our overcoats were not at all uncomfortable.

As we walked along, I said to Preston:

"Dawsey's 'account' is a good one. He never draws against shipments, but holds on, and sells sight drafts, thus making the exchange."

"Yes, I know; he's a close calculator."

"Does he continue to manage his negroes as formerly?"

"In much the same way, I reckon."

"Then he can't stand remarkably well with his neighbors."

"Oh! people round here don't mind such things. Many of them do as badly as he. Besides, Dawsey is a gentleman of good family. He inherited his plantation and two hundred hands."

Digitized by Google

"Indeed! How, then, did he become reduced to his present number?"

"He was a wild young fellow, and, before he was twenty-five, had squandered and gambled away everything but his land and some thirty negroes. Then he turned square round, and, from being prodigal and careless, became mean and cruel. He has a hundred now, and more ready money than any planter in the district."

A half hour's walk took us to Dawsey's negro quarters—a collection of about thirty low huts in the rear of his house. They were not so poor as some I had seen on cotton and rice plantations, but they seemed unfit for the habitation of any animal but the hog. Their floors were the bare ground, hardened by being moistened with water and pounded with mauls; and worn, as they were, several inches lower in the centre than at the sides, they must have formed, in rainy weather, the beds of small lakes. So much water would have been objectionable to white tenants; but negroes, like their friends the alligators, are amphibious animals; and Dawsey's were never known to make complaint. The chimneys were often merely vent-holes in the roof, though a few were tumbledown structures of sticks and clay; and not a window, nor an opening which courtesy could have christened a window, was to be seen in the entire collection. And, for that matter, windows were useless, for the wide crevices in the logs, which let in the air and rain, at the same time might admit the light. Two or three low beds at one end, a small pine bench, which held half a dozen wooden plates and spoons, and a large iron pot, resting on four stones over a low fire, and serving for both washtub and cook-kettle, composed the furniture of each interior.

Digitized by Google

No one of the cabins was over sixteen feet square, but each was "home" and "shelter" for three or four human beings. Walking on a short distance, we came to a larger hovel, in front of which about a dozen young chattels were playing. Seven or eight more, too young to walk, were crawling about on the ground inside. They had only one garment apiece—a long shirt of coarse linsey—and their heads and feet were bare. An old negress was seated in the doorway, knitting. Approaching her, I said:

"Aunty, are not these children cold?"

"Oh! no, massa; dey'm use' ter de wedder."

"Do you take care of all of them?"

"In de daytime I does, massa. In de night dar mudders takes de small 'uns."

"But some of them are white. Those two are as white as I am!"

"No, massa; dey'm brack. Ef you looks at dar eyes an' dar finger nails, you'll see dat."

"They're black, to be sure they are," said young Preston, laughing; "but they're about as white as Dawsey, and look wonderfully like him—eh, Aunty Sue?"

"I reckons, massa Joe!" replied the woman, running her hand through her wool, and grinning widely.

"What does he ask for *them*, aunty?"

"Doan't know, massa, but 'spect dey'm pooty high. Dem kine am hard ter raise."

"Yes," said Joe; "white blood—even Dawsey's—don't take naturally to mud."

"I reckons not, massa Joe!" said the old negress, with another grin.

Digitized by Google

Joe gave her a half-dollar piece, and, amid an avalanche of blessings, we passed on to Dawsey's "mansion"—if mansion it could be called—a story-and-a-half shanty, about thirty feet square, covered with rough, unpainted boards, and lit by two small, dingy windows. It was approached by a sandy walk, and the ground around its front entrance was littered with apple peelings, potato parings, and the refuse of the culinary department.

Joe rapped at the door, and, in a moment, it opened, and a middle-aged mulatto woman appeared. As soon as she perceived Preston, she grasped his two hands, and exclaimed:

"Oh! massa Robert, *do* buy har! Massa'll kill har, ef you doan't."

"But I can't, Dinah. Your master refuses my note, and I haven't the money now."

"Oh! oh! He'll kill har; he say he will. She woan't gib in ter him, an' he'll kill har, *shore*. Oh! oh!" cried the woman, wringing her hands, and bursting into tears.

"Is it 'Spasia?" asked Joe.

"Yas, massa Joe; "it'm 'Spasia. Massa hab sole yaller Tom 'way from har, an' he swar he'll kill har 'case she woan't gib in ter him. Oh! oh!"

"Where is your master?"

"He'm 'way wid har an' Black Cale. I reckon dey'm down ter de branch. I reckon dey'm whippin' on har *now!*"

"Come, Frank," cried Joe, starting off at a rapid pace; "let's see that performance."

"Hold on, Joe; wait for us. You'll get into trouble!" shouted his father, hurrying after him. The rest of us caught up with them in a few moments, and then all walked rapidly

Digitized by Google

on in the direction of the small run which borders the two plantations.

Before we had gone far, we heard loud screams, mingled with oaths and the heavy blows of a whip. Quickening our pace, we soon reached the bank of the little stream, which there was lined with thick underbrush. We could see no one, and the sounds had subsided. In a moment, however, a rough voice called out from behind the bushes:

"Have you had enough? Will you give up?"

"Oh! no, good massa; I can't do dat!" was the half-sobbing, half-moaning reply.

"Give it to her again, Cale!" cried the first voice; and again the whip descended, and again the piercing cries: "O Lord!" "Oh, pray doan't!" "O Lord, hab mercy!" "Oh! good massa, hab mercy!" mingled with the falling blows.

"This way!" shouted Joe, pressing through the bushes, and bounding down the bank toward the actors in this nineteenth-century tournament, wherein an armed knight and a doughty squire were set against a weak, defenceless woman.

Leaning against a pine at a few feet from the edge of the run, was a tall, bony man of about fifty. His hair was coarse and black, and his skin the color of tobacco juice. He wore the ordinary homespun of the district; and long, deep lines about his mouth and under his eyes told the story of a dissipated life. His entire appearance was anything but prepossessing.

At the distance of three or four rods, and bound to the charred trunk of an old tree, was a woman, several shades lighter than the man. Her feet were secured by stout cords, and her arms were clasped around the blackened stump, and

Digitized by Google

tied in that position. Her back was bare to the loins, and, as she hung there, moaning with agony, and shivering with cold, it seemed one mass of streaming gore.

The brawny black, whom Boss Joe had so eccentrically addressed at the negro meeting, years before, was in the act of whipping the woman; but, with one bound, young Preston was on him. Wrenching the whip from his hand, he turned on his master, crying out:

"Untie her, you white-livered devil, or I'll plough your back as you've ploughed hers!"

"Don't interfere here, you d—d whelp!" shouted Dawsey, livid with rage, and drawing his revolver.

"I'll give you enough of that, you cowardly hound!" cried Joe, taking a small Derringer from his pocket, and coolly advancing upon Dawsey.

The latter levelled his pistol, but, before he could fire, by a dexterous movement of my cane, I struck it from his hand. Drawing instantly a large knife, he rushed upon me. The knife was descending—in another instant I should have "tasted Southern steel," had not Frank caught his arm, wrenched the weapon from his grasp, and, with the fury of an aroused tiger, sprung on him and borne him to the ground. Planting his knee firmly on Dawsey's breast, and twisting his neckcloth tightly about his throat, Frank yelled out:

"Stand back. Let *me* deal with him!"

"But you will kill him."

"Well, he would have killed *you!*" he cried, tightening his hold on Dawsey's throat.

"Let him up, Frank. Let the devil have fair play," said Joe; "I'll give him a chance at ten paces."

Digitized by Google

"Yes, let him up, my son; he is unarmed."

Frank slowly and reluctantly released his hold, and the woman-whipper rose. Looking at us for a moment—a mingled look of rage and defiance—he turned, without speaking, and took some rapid strides up the bank.

"Hold on, Colonel Dawsey!" cried Joe, elevating his Derringer; "take another step, and I'll let daylight through you. You've just got to promise you won't whip this woman, or take your chance at ten paces."

[I afterward learned that Joe was deadly sure with the pistol.]

Dawsey turned slowly round, and, in a sullen tone, asked:

"Who are you, *gentlemen*, that interfere with my private affairs?"

"*My* name, sir, is Kirke, of New York; and this young man is my son."

"Not Mr. Kirke, my factor?"

"The same, sir."

"Well, Mr. Kirke, I'm sorry to say you're just now in d—d pore business."

"I *have* been, sir. I've done yours for some years, and I'm heartily ashamed of it. I'll try to mend in that particular, however."

"Well, no more words, Colonel Dawsey," said Joe. "Here's a Derringer, if you'd like a pop at me."

"'Tain't an even chance," replied Dawsey; "you know it."

"Take it, or promise not to whip the woman. I won't waste more time on such a sneaking coward as you are."

Dawsey hesitated, but finally, in a dogged way, made the required promise, and took himself off.

Digitized by Google

While this conversation was going on, Preston and the negro man had untied the woman. Her back was bleeding profusely, and she was unable to stand. Lifting her in their arms, the two conveyed her to the top of the bank, and then, making a bed of their coats, laid her on the ground. We remained there until the negro returned from the house with a turpentine wagon, and conveyed the woman "home." We then returned to the plantation, and that afternoon, accompanied by Frank and Joe, I resumed my journey.

By way of episode, I will mention that the slave woman, after being confined to her bed several weeks, recovered. Then Dawsey renewed his attack upon her, and, from the effects of a second whipping, she died.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXII.

DIFFICULTIES.

RETURNING from the South a few weeks after the events narrated in the previous chapter, Frank and I were met at Goldsboro by Preston and Selma, when the latter accompanied us to the North, and once more resumed her place in David's family.

On the first of February following, Frank, then not quite twenty-one, was admitted a partner in the house of Russell, Rollins & Co., and, in the succeeding summer, was sent to Europe on business of the firm. Shortly after his return, in the following spring, he came on from Boston with a proposal from Cragin that I should embark with them and young Preston in an extensive speculation. Deeming any business in which Cragin was willing to engage worthy of careful consideration, I listened to Frank's exposition of the plan of operations. He had originated the project, and in it he displayed the comprehensive business mind and rare blending of caution and boldness which characterized his father. As the result of this transaction had an important influence on the future of some of the actors in my story, I will detail its programme.

It was during the Crimean war. The Russian ports were closed, and Great Britain and the Continent of Europe were

Digitized by Google

dependent entirely on the Southern States for their supply of resinous articles. The rivers at the South were low, and it was not supposed they would rise sufficiently to float produce to market before the occurrence of the spring freshets, in the following April or May. Only forty thousand barrels of common rosin were held in Wilmington—the largest naval store port in the world; and it was estimated that not more than two hundred thousand were on hand in the other ports of Savannah, Ga., Georgetown, S. C., Newbern and Washington, N. C., and in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Very little was for sale in London, Liverpool, or Glasgow, the largest foreign markets for the article; and Frank thought that a hundred and fifty thousand barrels could be purchased. That quantity, taken at once out of market, would probably so much enhance the value of the article, that the operation would realize a large profit before the new crop came forward. The purchases were to be made simultaneously in the various markets, and about two hundred thousand dollars were required to carry through the transaction. One hundred thousand of this was to be furnished in equal proportions by the parties interested; the other hundred thousand would be realized by Joseph Preston's negotiating "long exchange" on Russell, Rollins & Co.

I declined to embark in the speculation, but the others carried it out as laid down in the programme; the only deviation being that, at Frank's suggestion, Mr. Robert Preston was apprised of the intended movement, and allowed to purchase, on his own account, as much produce as could be secured in Newbern. He bought about seven thousand barrels, paid for them by drawing at ninety days on Russell, Rollins & Co., and

Digitized by Google

held them for sale at Newbern, agreeing to satisfy his drafts with the proceeds. These drafts amounted to a trifle over eighty-two hundred dollars.

About a month after this transaction was entered into, our firm received the following letter from Preston:

"GENTLEMEN: An unfortunate difference with my son prevents my longer using him as my indorser. I have not, as yet, been able to secure another; and, our banks requiring two home names on time drafts, I have to beg you to honor a small bill at one day's sight. I have drawn for one thousand dollars. Please honor."

To this I at once replied:

"DEAR SIR: We have advice of your draft for one thousand dollars. To protect your credit, we shall pay it; but we beg you will draw no more, till you forward bills of lading.

"You are now overdrawn some five thousand dollars, which, by the maturing of your drafts, has become a *cash* advance. The death of our senior, Mr. Randall, and the consequent withdrawal of his capital, has left us with an extended business and limited means. Money, also, is very tight, and we therefore earnestly beg you to put us in funds at the earliest possible moment."

No reply was received to this letter; but, about ten days after its transmission, Preston himself walked into my private office. His clothes were travel stained, and he appeared haggard and careworn. I had never seen him look so miserably.

Digitized by Google

He met me cordially, and soon referred to the state of his affairs. His wife, the winter before, had agreed to reside permanently at Newbern, and content herself with an allowance of three thousand dollars annually; but at the close of the year he found that she had contracted debts to the extent of several thousand more. He was pressed for these debts; his interest was in arrears, and he could raise no money for lack of another indorser. Ruin stared him in the face, unless I again put my shoulder to the wheel, and pried him out of the mire. The turpentine business was not paying as well as formerly, but the new plantation was encumbered with only the original mortgage—less than six thousand dollars—and was then worth, owing to an advance in the value of land, fully twenty thousand. He would secure me by a mortgage on that property, but I *must* allow the present indebtedness to stand, and let him increase it four or five thousand dollars. That amount would extricate him from present difficulties; and, to avoid future embarrassments, he would take measures for a legal separation from his wife.

I heard him through, and then said:

"I cannot help you, my friend. I am very sorry; but my own affairs are in a most critical state. I owe over a hundred thousand dollars, maturing within twenty days, and my present available resources are not more than fifty thousand. I have three hundred thousand worth of produce on hand, but the market is so depressed that I cannot realize a dollar upon it. The banks have shut down, and money is two per cent. a month in the street. What you owe us would aid me wonderfully; but I can rub through without it. That much I can bear, but not a dollar more."

Digitized by Google

He walked the room for a time, and was silent; then, turning to me, he said—each separate word seeming a groan:

"I have cursed every one I ever loved, and now I am bringing trouble—perhaps disaster—upon *you*, the only real friend I have left."

"Pshaw! my good fellow, don't talk in that way. What you owe us is only a drop in the bucket. We have made twice that amount out of you; so give yourself no uneasiness, if you *never* pay it."

"But I must pay it—I *shall* pay it;" and, continuing to pace the room silently for a few moments, he added, giving me his hand: "Good-by; I'm going back to-night."

"Back to-night!—without seeing Selly, or my wife? You are mad!"

"I *must* go."

"You must *not* go. You are letting affairs trouble you too much. Come, go home with me, and see Kate. A few words from her will make a new man of you."

"No, no; I must go back at once. I must raise this money somehow."

"Send money to the dogs! Come with me, and have a good night's rest. You'll think better of this in the morning. And now it occurs to me that Kate has about seven thousand belonging to Frank. He means to settle it on Selly when they are married, and she might as well have it first as last. Perhaps you can get it now."

"But I might be robbing my own child."

"You can give the farm as security; it's worth twice the amount."

"Well, I'll stay. Let us see your wife at once."

Digitized by Google

While we were seated in the parlor, after supper, I broached the subject of Preston's wants to Kate. She heard me through attentively, and then quietly said:

"Frank is of age—he can do as he pleases; but *I* would not advise him to make the loan. I once heard my father scout at the idea of taking security on property a thousand miles away. I would not wound Mr. Preston's feelings, but—his wife's extravagance has led him into this difficulty, and her property should extricate him from it. Her town house, horses, and carriages should be sold. She ought to be made to feel some of the mortification she has brought upon him."

Preston's face brightened; a new idea seemed to strike him. "You are right. I will sell everything." His face clouded again, as he continued: "But I cannot realize soon enough. Your husband needs money at once."

"Never mind me; I can take care of myself. But what is this trouble with Joe? Tell me, I will arrange it. Everything can go on smoothly again."

"It cannot be arranged. There can be no reconciliation between us."

"What prevents? Who is at fault—you, or he?"

"I am. He will never forgive me!"

"Forgive you! I can't imagine what you have done, that admits of no forgiveness."

He rose, and walked the room for a while in gloomy silence, then said:

"I will tell you. It is right you should know. You *both* should know the sort of man you have esteemed and befriended for so many years;" and, resuming his seat, he related the following occurrences:

Digitized by Google

"Everything went on as usual at the plantation, till some months after Rosey's marriage to Ally. Then a child was born to them. It was white. Rosey refused to reveal its father, but it was evidently not her husband. Ally, being a proud, high-spirited fellow, took the thing terribly to heart. He refused to live with his wife, or even to see her. I tried to reconcile them, but without success. Old Dinah, who had previously doted on Rosey, turned about, and began to beat and abuse her cruelly. To keep the child out of the old woman's way, I took her into the house, and she remained there till about two months ago. Then, one day, Larkin, the trader, of whom you bought Phylly and the children, came to me, wanting a woman house-servant. I was pressed for money, and I offered him—a thing I never did before—two or three of my family slaves. They did not suit, but he said Rosey would, and proposed to buy her and the child. I refused. He offered me fifteen hundred dollars for them, but I still refused. Then he told me that he had spoken to the girl, and she wished him to buy her. I doubted it, and said so; but he called Rosey to us, and she confirmed it, and, in an excited way, told me she would run away, or drown herself, if I did not sell her. She said she could live no longer on the same plantation with Ally. I told her I would send Ally away; but she replied: 'No; I am tired of this place. I have suffered so much here, I want to get away. I *shall* go; whether alive or dead, is for *you* to say.' I saw she was in earnest; I was hard pressed for money; Larkin promised to get her a kind master, and—I sold her."

"Sold her! My God! Preston, she was your own child!"

Digitized by Google

"I know it," he replied, burying his face in his hands. "The curse of GOD was on it; it has been on me for years." After a few moments, he added: "But hear the rest, and *you* will curse me too."

Overcome with emotion, he groaned audibly. I said nothing, and a pause of some minutes ensued. Then, in a choked, broken voice, he continued:

"The rosin transaction had been gone into. I had used up what blank indorsements I had. Needing more, and wanting to consult with Joe about selling the rosin, I went to Mobile. It was five weeks ago. I arrived there about dark, and put up at the Battle House. Joe had boarded there. I was told he had left, and gone to housekeeping. A negro conducted me to a small house in the outskirts of the town. He said Joe lived there. Wishing to surprise him, I went in without knocking. The house had two parlors, separated by folding doors. In the back one a young woman was clearing away the tea things; in the front one, Joe was seated by the fire, with a young child on his knee. I put my hand on his shoulder, and said: 'Joe, whose child have you here?' He looked up, and laughingly said: 'Why, father, you ought to know; you've seen it before!' I looked closely at it—it was Rosey's! I said so. 'Yes, father,' he replied; 'and there's Rosey herself. Larkin promised she should have a kind master, and—he kept his word.' The truth flashed upon me—the child was his! My only son had seduced his *own sister!* I staggered back in horror. I told him who Rosey was, and then"—no words can express the intense agony depicted on his face as he said this—"then he cursed me! O my God! HE CURSED ME!"

I pitied him. I could but pity him; and I said:

Digitized by Google

"Do not be so cast down, my friend. I once heard you say: 'The Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting!'"

"But He cannot have mercy on some!" he cried. "*My* sins have been too great; they cannot be blotted out. I embittered the life of my wife; I have driven my daughter from her home; sold my own child; made my generous, noble-hearted boy do a horrible crime—a crime that will haunt him forever. Oh! the curse of God is on me. My misery is greater than I can bear."

"No, my friend; God curses none of his creatures. You have reaped what you have sown, that is all; but you have suffered enough. Better things, believe me, are in store for you."

"No, no; everything is gone—wife, children, all! I am alone—the past, nothing but remorse; the future, ruin and dishonor!"

"But Selly is left you. *She* will always love you."

"No, no! Even Selly would curse me, if she knew *all!*"

No one spoke for a full half hour, and he continued pacing up and down the room. When, at last, he seated himself, more composed, I asked:

"What became of Rosey and the child?"

"I do not know. I was shut in my room for several days. When I got out, I was told Joe had freed her, and she had disappeared, no one knew whither. I tried every means to trace her, but could not. At the end of a week, I went home, what you see me—a broken-hearted man."

The next morning, despite our urgent entreaties, he returned to the South.

* * * * * *

Digitized by Google

The twenty days were expiring. By hard struggling I had met my liabilities, but the last day—the crisis—was approaching. Thirty thousand dollars of our acceptances had accumulated together, and were maturing on that day. When I went home, on the preceding night, we had only nineteen thousand in bank. I had exhausted all our receivables. Where the eleven thousand was to come from, I did not know. Only one resource seemed left me—the hypothecation of produce; and a resort to that, at that time, before warehouse receipts became legitimate securities, would be ruinous to our credit. My position was a terrible one. No one not a merchant can appreciate or realize it. With thousands upon thousands of assets, the accumulations of years, my standing among merchants, and, what I valued more than all, my untarnished credit, were in jeopardy for the want of a paltry sum.

I went home that night with a heavy heart; but Kate's hopeful words encouraged me. With her and the children left to me, I need not care for the rest; all might go, and I could commence again at the bottom of the hill. The next morning I walked down town with a firm spirit, ready to meet disaster like a man. The letters by the early mail were on my desk. I opened them one after another, hurriedly, eagerly. There were no remittances! I had expected at least five thousand dollars. For a moment my courage failed me. I rose, and paced the room, and thoughts like these passed through my mind: "The last alternative has come. Pride must give way to duty. I must hypothecate produce, and protect my correspondents. I must sacrifice myself, to save my friends!

"But here are two letters I have thrown aside. They

Digitized by Google

are addressed to me personally. Mere letters of friendship! What is friendship, at a time like this?—friendship without money! Pshaw! I wouldn't give a fig for all the friends in the world!"

Mechanically I opened one of them. An enclosure dropped from it to the floor. Without pausing to pick it up, I read:

"DEAR FATHER: Mother writes me you are hard pressed. Sell my U. S. stock—it will realize over seven thousand. It is yours. Enclosed is Cragin's certified check for ten thousand. If you need more, draw on *him*, at sight, for any amount. He says he will stand by you to the death.

"Love to mother. FRANK."

"P. S.—Fire away, old fellow! Hallet is ugly, but I'll go my pile on you, spite of the devil. CRAGIN."

"SAVED! saved by my wife and child!" I leaned my head on my desk. When I rose, there were tears upon it.

It wanted some minutes of ten, but I was nervously impatient to blot out those terrible acceptances. I should then be safe; I should then breathe freely. As I passed out of my private office, I opened the other letter. It was from Preston. Pausing a moment, I read it:

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND: I enclose you sight check of Branch Bank of Cape Fear on Bank of Republic, for $10,820. Apply what is needed to pay my account; the rest hold subject to my drafts.

"I have sold my town house, furniture, horses, &c., and

Digitized by Google

the proceeds will pay my home debts. I shall therefore not need to draw the balance for, say, sixty days. God bless you!"

"Well, the age of miracles is *not* passed! How *did* he raise the money?"

Stepping back into the private office, I called my partner:

"Draw checks for all the acceptances due to-day; get them certified, and take up the bills at once. Don't let the grass grow under your feet. I shall be away the rest of the day, and I want to see them before I go. Here is a draft from Preston; it will make our account good."

He looked at it, and, laughing, said:

"Yes, and leave about fifty dollars in bank."

"Well, never mind; we are out of the woods."

When he had gone, I sat down, and wrote the following letter:

"MY DEAR FRANK: I return Cragin's check, with many thanks. I have not sold your stock. My legitimate resources have carried me through.

"I need not say, my boy, that I feel what you would have done for me. Words are not needed between *us*.

"Tell Cragin that I consider him a trump—the very ace of hearts.

"Your mother and I will see you in a few days."

In half an hour, with the two letters in my pocket, I was on my way home. Handing them to Kate, I took her in my arms; and, as I brushed the still bright, golden hair from her broad forehead, I felt I was the richest man living.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SUDDEN DISSOLUTION.

WITHIN the same week I went to Boston. I arrived just after dark; but, as it was again "steamer night," I drove directly to the office of Russell, Rollins & Co.

David occupied his accustomed stand at the old desk, and Frank was seated near him. After the usual greetings were over, I said to Frank:

"Come! your mother is in the carriage at the door, and wants you to spend the evening with her."

"I can't. I'm very sorry;" and he added, in a lower tone: "Selly has just heard of her father's death, and goes home to-morrow. I must spend the evening with her."

"Preston dead! How was it?"

"He was thrown from a horse, and died the same day. She got the telegram yesterday. I'll go down and see mother for a moment."

"Well, do; and we'll go out to Cambridge with you. The poor girl must feel badly."

"Yes; she takes it very hard."

As he went out, I rapped at the door of the inner office. Hallet and Cragin were both there, and the latter greeted me cordially. The other was very polite and very stiff, as usual.

Digitized by Google

After a few general remarks were exchanged, I said.

"Well, Mr. Hallet, how does Frank get on?"

"Oh! very well. Knows a little too much, like most young men of his age; but he does very well."

"'Very well!' Mr. Hallet, d—d if he don't; he's the smartest boy living. Made a clean forty thousand on the rosin speculation. Forced it on Hallet against his better judgment —ha! ha!" and Cragin laughed till he showed all that were left of his tobacco-stained teeth.

"Not exactly *clear*, Mr. Cragin," said Hallet, a little sarcastically.

"I'm *sure* of it, Mr. Hallet," replied Cragin, in his quick, impulsive way; "but we might as well understand each other about this first as last. If we lose by Preston, the loss is not charged to Frank; it must go to the rosin operation. You took your part of the profits, you must bear your share of the losses."

"Very well," replied Hallet, impatiently; "we'll discuss that some other time."

A short rap came at the office door, and Frank entered, hat in hand.

"Mother insists on going now. Are you ready, sir?" he said, addressing me.

Before I could reply, Hallet sharply asked:

"Have you written your letters for the steamer?"

"Yes, sir."

"What have you said to Maclean, Maris & Co. about the gum copal?"

"I will show you, sir;" and, going into the other room, he soon returned with an open letter, still wet from the copying

Digitized by Google

press. Hallet took it, read it over slowly and carefully, and, handing it back, said, in the slightly pompous tone natural to him:

"That will do; you can go."

I was rising to bid them "good evening," when Hallet said to me:

"Mr. Kirke, I dislike to trespass on your time; but I wish to confer with you a few moments on a private matter."

"Certainly, sir;" and I added, turning to Cragin: "Kate is going out with Frank. You can take a seat with her, if you like."

"Thank you; I think I will—and there'll be room enough for David, I guess."

"I want David here," said Hallet, curtly.

"Oh! very well. You'll come soon, Ned?"

"Yes; before the tea cakes are cold."

When Cragin had gone, Hallet, opening the door, called:

"David!"

The bookkeeper entered, and took a seat beside me.

"Mr. Kirke," said Hallet, when the other was seated, "I want to talk with you and David about Frank. He has entangled himself with that Southern girl, and, I hear, means to marry her. I strongly object to it. I've not a particle of influence with him, and *you* must prevent it."

"Why should I prevent it?" I asked, rather sharply. "What is there against the young woman?"

"Nothing against her character, but she'd not be a fit wife for Frank. These Southern women are educated with wrong ideas; they make poor wives for poor men. He must marry a

Digitized by Google

rich girl, or one brought up with New England habits. This one would bring him nothing, and spend all he made."

"But she is an only daughter, and her father is said to be rich."

"Pshaw! that is bosh! Preston always lived high, and I'll guarantee his estate is bankrupt. I'm sorry for it, for he owes us."

"Is that so! Largely?"

"No, not largely. How much is he overdrawn, David?"

"Eighty-two hundred and odd."

"I'm surprised at that," I said. "The old house did not allow such things."

"Neither do we; 'twas Cragin's work. He thought 'twould annoy Frank if the drafts went back, and"—he hesitated a moment—"he insisted upon it. 'Twill be a total loss. Preston acted very dishonorably about it."

"Dishonorably! How so, Mr. Hallet?" I asked, in a tone of decided displeasure.

"Well, he drew on us to pay for some rosin bought on speculation. He agreed to ship it to us, or, if he sold it there, to remit enough to cover the drafts. He sold it some weeks ago, and diverted the proceeds."

"Is it possible!" I exclaimed.

It was true. To relieve me, Preston—an honest man, if one ever existed—had ruined his good name; done an act which, had he lived, would have branded him to his latest day.

I said no more, and Hallet remarked:

"I would be glad to have you break up that connection, Mr. Kirke."

"I cannot, Mr. Hallet. I am opposed to interfering in such matters. I taught Frank to think for himself."

Digitized by Google

"You taught him to think too much for himself. He is self-willed and headstrong to a fault."

"Perhaps you might have trained him better, if you had tried," I replied, with a slight sneer.

"Pardon me, Mr. Kirke; I mean no reflection on your management of him. I only feel that this is a most important step, and he ought to be advised. He should marry rich, for he has nothing, and cannot rely upon me."

"He does not rely upon you; but he is a partner now, and his income ought to support a wife."

"His income is uncertain; he may not remain long in the concern," replied Hallet, coolly.

David started. His face reddened to the roots of his hair, and he asked, in a sententious way:

"Who told thee that, John?"

"No one," replied that gentleman, seemingly surprised at the abrupt question; "I am deliberating on it myself. He is sowing dissension between Cragin and me. The lowest boy in the office—even you, David, pay more heed to him than to *me*."

"That may be your own fault," I said, a little sarcastically. "If you should treat him as Cragin and David do, you would have nothing to complain of."

"I treat him well, sir; but I make him *know his place*." The last words were emphasized in a hard, wicked tone.

Certain old recollections had been rushing across my mind during the latter part of this conversation, and this last remark brought me to my feet, as I said:

"You treat him like a dog, sir! I have seen it. If he were not your son, he should not stay with you another day!"

Digitized by Google

In my excitement I crossed the room, and stood directly before him. His face flushed, and his eye quailed before my steady gaze, but he said nothing.

David remarked, in a mild tone: "Edmund, that ain't the right spirit, it ain't."

"You don't know the whole, David. If you did, even *you* would say he is the basest wretch living."

Hallet pressed his teeth together; his eyes flashed fire, and he seemed about to spring upon me. Mastering his passion, he rose, after a moment, and extended his hand, saying:

"Come, Mr. Kirke, this is not the talk of old friends! Let us shake hands, and forget it."

"Never, sir! I took your hand for the last time when I left this counting room, twenty years ago. I never touch it again! I shall tell that boy, *to-night*, that you are his father."

"You will not do so imprudent a thing? I will do anything for him—anything you require. I promise you, on my honor;" and the stately head of the great house of Russell, Rollins & Co. sank into a chair, and bent down, like a convicted criminal.

"I cannot trust you," I said, pacing the room.

"Thee can, Edmund; he means it. He is sorry for the wrong he's done," said the old bookkeeper, in the mild, winning tone which made me so love him in my boyhood.

"Well, let him *prove* that he means it; let him tell you all; let him tell you how much he has to repent of!"

"I *have* told him all. I told him years ago."

"Did you tell him how you cast off the poor girl? how for years she vainly plead for a paltry pittance to keep her child from starving, and herself from sin? Did you tell him how

Digitized by Google

you drove her from you with curses, when she prayed to be saved from the pit of infamy into which you had plunged her? Did you tell him"—and he writhed on his seat in such agony as only the guilty can feel—"how, at last, after all those wretched years, she died of starvation and disease, with all that mountain of sin on her soul, and all of it heaped on her by YOU!"

"Oh, no; I did not—I could not tell him that! I did not know I had done *that!*" groaned the stately gentleman.

"You lie, John Hallet! you know you lie! and may God deal with you as you dealt with her;" and I took up my hat, and laid my hand on the door.

"Stop! stop, Edmund! Don't go with those words. Thee would not have God deal with thee, as thee has dealt with others!" said David, in the same mild tone as before.

"True, David; I should not wish him harm; but I loathe and detest the hypocritical villain. Frank shall leave him to-night, and forever!"

Hallet looked up. His face was pale as marble, and his hands clenched tightly the arms of his chair. "Don't go, Mr. Kirke," he cried; "stay one moment. Can't this be arranged?"

"Yes, sir. Sign a dissolution at once—*here*—NOW; and give Frank your check for twenty thousand dollars."

"No, no! You don't mean that! It is too much—you can't ask *that!*" gasped the great merchant.

"Too much for the son of a man worth a million? Too much for starving his mother, and turning him adrift at seven years old? It is not enough! He must have *thirty* thousand!"

Digitized by Google

"You are mad, Mr. Kirke!" and he looked at me with a pleading face. "I cannot pay that amount down. It is impossible."

"David, how much has he in bank on private account?"

Hallet cast a beseeching glance at his bookkeeper; but, without moving a muscle, the old man replied:

"Fifty-three thousand."

"I knew you lied, Hallet. It is natural to you."

"But I can't let Frank go without Mr. Cragin's consent."

"I will arrange with Cragin. Sign the check, and draw the paper at once, or I go."

"But give me time to think—see me to-morrow."

"I shall never exchange a word with you after to-night. You can have ten minutes—not a second more;" and I took out my watch to count the time.

He rested his head on his hand for a moment, and then, turning to me, said:

"You promise that this interview, and all that has passed, shall never be mentioned by you?"

"That depends on yourself—never without cause."

"David, please write the check," said the senior partner, proceeding himself to draw up the agreement. In a few minutes he handed it to me. It was short, and merely recited that the copartnership which had theretofore existed between John Hallet, Augustus Cragin, and Henry F. Mandell, under the name and style of Russell, Rollins & Co., was on that day dissolved by mutual consent; said Mandell withdrawing, and assigning the control of all the assets of said firm to said Hallet and Cragin, and releasing to said Hallet any portion of its capital and profits to which he might be entitled.

Digitized by Google

I read the document, and quietly handed it back.

"That will not do, Mr. Hallet. Thirty thousand dollars settles with *you*, his father. I have not, and *shall* not make any settlement with the firm. David must pay Frank what is due him—no more, no less."

"But," began Mr. Hallet.

"I have nothing more to say on the subject, sir."

He drew a long sigh. The parting with an only son, and with thirty thousand dollars, at one and the same time, affected him deeply. He might have borne the loss of the son; but the loss of the money rent his distorted soul into fragments. However, he rewrote the paper, and passed it to me. It was all right; and when he had signed, and David had witnessed it, I placed it in my pocket book. Then, with a trembling hand, he handed me the check. It was drawn to my order; and I remarked, as I took it:

"This is not what I require, sir. I want your check, indorsed by David."

"This is most unaccountable, Mr. Kirke. Do you question my check for thirty thousand dollars?" he asked, his face flushing with anger.

"Oh! no, sir, not at all; but you might stop its payment. With David's indorsement, you would not *dare* to do it."

"I will indorse it," said David; and he quietly proceeded to write another.

That hard, soulless man had a wife and children; but that old bookkeeper was the only living thing in all the wide world that he either loved or trusted!

I placed the check with the other paper, and, with David, soon passed down the old stairway.

Digitized by Google

* * * * * *

I found Selma plunged in the deepest grief. The telegram which informed her of Preston's death was dated three days before (it had been sent to Goldsboro for transmission, the telegraph lines not then running to Newbern), and she could not possibly reach the plantation until after her father's burial; but she insisted on going at once. She would have his body exhumed; she must take a last look at that face which had never beamed on her but in love!

Frank proposed to escort her, but she knew he could not well be spared from business at that season; and, with a bravery and self-reliance not common to her years and her sex, she determined to go alone.

Shortly after my arrival at the house, she retired to her room with Kate, to make the final arrangements for the journey; and I seated myself with David, Cragin, and Frank, in the little back parlor, which the gray-haired old Quaker and his son-in-law had converted into a smoking room.

As Cragin was lighting his cigar, I said to him:

"Have you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"The dissolution of Russell, Rollins & Co."

"No; there's nothing so good stirring. But you'll hear it some two years hence."

"Read that;" and I handed him the paper which Hallet had signed.

"What is it, father?" asked Frank, his face alive with interest.

"Cragin will show it to you, if it ever gets through his hair. I reckon he's learning to read."

Digitized by Google

"Well, I believe I *can't* read. What the deuce does it mean?"

"Just what it says—Frank is free."

The young man glanced over the paper. His face expressed surprise, but he said nothing.

"Then you've heard how things have been going on?" asked Cragin.

"No, not a word. I've *seen* that Hallet was abusing the boy shamefully. I came on, wanting an excuse to break the copartnership."

"Do you know you've done me the greatest service in the world? I told Hallet, the other day, that we couldn't pull together much longer. He refused to let me off till our term is up; but I've got him now;" and he laughed in boyish glee.

"Of course, the paper releases you as well as Frank. It's a general dissolution."

"Of course it is. How did you manage to get it? Hallet must have been crazy. He wasn't *John Hallet*, that's certain!"

"The *genuine* John, but a *little* excited."

"He must have been. But I'm rid of him, thank the Lord! Come, what do you say to Frank's going in with me? I'll pack him off to Europe at once—he can secure most of the old business."

"*He* must decide about that. He can come with me, if he likes. He'll not go a begging, that's certain. He'll have thirty thousand to start with."

"Thirty thousand!" exclaimed Frank. "No, father, you can't do that; you need every dollar you've got."

Digitized by Google

"Yes, I do, and more too. But the money is yours, not mine. You shall have it to-morrow."

"Mine! Where did it come from?"

"From a relative of yours. But he's modest; he don't want to be known."

"But I *ought* to know. I thought I had no relatives."

"Well, you haven't—only this one, and he's rich as mud. He gave you the five thousand; but this is a last instalment—you won't get another red cent."

"I don't feel exactly like taking money in that way."

"Pshaw, my boy! I tell you it's yours—rightfully and honestly. You ought to have more; but he's closefisted, and you must be content with this."

"Well, Frank," said Cragin, "what do you say to hitching horses with me? I'll give you two fifths, and put a hundred against your thirty."

"What shall I do?" said Frank to me.

"You'd better accept. It's more than I can allow you."

"Then it's a trade?" asked Cragin.

"Yes," said Frank.

"Well, old gentleman, what do *you* say—will you move the old stool?" said Cragin, addressing David.

"Yes; I like Frank too well to stay with even his father."

In the gleeful mood which had taken possession of the old man, the words slipped from his tongue before he was aware of it. He would have recalled them on the instant, but it was too late. Cragin caught them, and exclaimed:

"His father! Well, that explains some riddles. D—d if I won't call the new firm Hallet, Cragin & Co. I've got him all around—ha! ha!"

Digitized by Google

Frank seemed thunderstruck. Soon he plied me with questions.

"I can say nothing; I gave my word I would not. David has betrayed it; let him explain, if he pleases."

The old bookkeeper then told the young man his history, revealing everything but the degradation of his poor mother. Frank walked the room, struggling with contending emotions. When David concluded, he put his hand in mine, and spoke a few low words. His voice sounded like his mother's. It was again *her* blessing that I heard.

* * * * * *

Two weeks afterward, the old sign came down from the old warehouse—came down, after hanging there three quarters of a century, and in its place went up a black board, on which emblazoned in glaring gilt letters, were the two words,

"JOHN HALLET."

On the same day, the busy crowd passing up old Long Wharf might have seen, over a doorway not far distant, a plainer sign. It read:

"CRAGIN, MANDELL & Co."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIV.

A HURRIED JOURNEY.

KATE heard frequently from Selma within the first two months after her departure, but then her letters suddenly ceased. Her last one expressed the intention of returning to the North during the following week. We looked for her, but she did not come. Week after week went by, and still she did not come. Kate wrote, inquiring when we might expect her, but received no reply. She wrote again and again, and still no answer came. "Something has happened to her. *Do* write Mrs. Preston," said Kate. I wrote her. She either did not deign to reply, or she did not receive the letter.

None of Selma's friends had heard from her for more than three months, and we were in a state of painful anxiety and uncertainty, when, one morning, among my letters, I found one addressed to my wife, in Selma's handwriting. Her previous letters had been mailed at Trenton, but this was postmarked "Newbern." I sent it at once to my house. About an hour afterward I was surprised by Kate's appearance in the office. Her face was pale, her manner hurried and excited. She held a small carpet bag in her hand.

"You must start at once by the first train. You've not a moment to spare!"

Digitized by Google

"Start where?"

She handed me the letter. "Read that."

It was hurriedly and nervously written. I read:

"MY DEAREST FRIEND: I know *you* have not forsaken me, but I have written you, oh! so many times. To-day, Ally has told me that perhaps our letters are intercepted at the Trenton post office. It must be so. He takes this to Newbern. Is he not kind? He has been my faithful friend through all. Though ordered away from the plantation, he refused to go, and stood by me through the worst. He, whom my own sister so cruelly wronged, has done everything for me! Whatever may become of me, I shall ever bless him.

"I have not heard from or seen any of my friends. Even my brother has not answered my letters; but he must be here on the 17th, at the sale. That is now my only hope. I shall then be freed from this misery—worse than death. God bless you! Your wretched SELMA."

"I will go," was all that I said. Kate sat down, and wept. "Oh! some terrible thing has befallen her! What can it be?"

I was giving some hurried directions to my partners, when a telegram was handed in. It was from Boston, and addressed to me personally. I opened it, and read:

"I have just heard that Selma is a slave. To be sold on the seventeenth. I can't go. You must. Buy her on my account. Pay any price. I have written Frank. Let nothing prevent your starting at once. If your partners should be short while you're away, let them draw on me.

"AUGUSTUS CRAGIN."

Digitized by Google

It was then the morning of the twelfth. Making all the connections, and there being no delay of the trains, I should reach the plantation early on the seventeenth.

At twelve o'clock I was on the way. Steam was too slow for my impatience. I would have harnessed the lightning. At last—it was sundown of the sixteenth—the stage drove into Newbern.

With my carpet bag in my hand, I rushed into the hotel. Four or five loungers were in the office, and the lazy bar-tender was mixing drinks behind the counter.

"Sir, I want a horse, or a horse and buggy, at once."

"A horse? Ye're in a hurry, hain't ye?"

"Yes."

"Wall, I reckon ye'll hev ter git over it. Thar hain't a durned critter in th' whole place."

"I'm in no mood for jesting, sir. I want a horse *at once.* I will deposit twice his value."

"Ye couldn't git nary critter, stranger, ef ye wus made uv gold. They're all off—off ter Squire Preston's sale."

"The sale! Has it begun?"

"I reckon! Ben a gwine fur two days."

My heart sank within me. I was too late!

"Are all the negroes sold?"

"No; them comes on ter morrer. He's got a likely gang."

I breathed more freely. At this moment a well-dressed gentleman, followed by a good-looking yellow man, entered the room. He wore spurs, and was covered with dust. Approaching the counter, he said:

"Here, you lousy devil—a drink for me and my boy. I'm dryer than a parson—Old Bourbon."

Digitized by Google

As the bartender poured out the liquor, the newcomer's eye fell upon me. His face seemed familiar, but I could not recall it. Scanning me for a moment, he held out his hand in a free, cordial manner, saying:

"Ah, Mr. Kirke, is this you? You don't remember me? my name is Gaston."

"Mr. Gaston, I'm glad to see you," I replied, returning his salutation.

"Have a drink, sir?"

"Thank you." I emptied the glass. I was jaded, and had eaten nothing since morning. "I'm in pursuit of a horse under difficulties, Mr. Gaston. Perhaps you can tell me where to get one. I must be at Preston's to-night."

"They're scarcer than hen's teeth round here, just now, I reckon. But hold on; I go there in the morning. I'll borrow a buggy, and you can ride up with me."

"No, I must be there to-night. How far is it?"

"Twenty miles."

"Well, I'll walk. Landlord, give me supper at once."

"*Walk* there! My dear sir, we don't abuse strangers in 'these diggin's.' The road is sandier than an Arab desert. You'd never get there afoot. Tom," he added, calling to his man, "give Buster some oats; rub him down, and have him here in half an hour. Vanish, now, like greased lightning." Then, turning to me, he continued: "You can have *my* horse. He's a spirited fellow, and you'll need to keep an eye on him; but he'll get you there in two hours."

"But how will *you* get on?"

"I'll take my boy's, and leave the darky here."

"Mr. Gaston, I cannot tell you the service you're doing me."

Digitized by Google

"Don't speak of it, my dear sir. A stranger can have anything of mine but my wife. I keep *her* as private property;" and he laughed pleasantly.

He went with me into the supper room, and there told me that the sale of Preston's plantation, furniture, live stock, farm tools, &c., had occupied the two previous days; and that the negroes were to be put on the block at nine o'clock the next morning. "I've got my eye on one or two of them, that I mean to buy. The niggers will sell well, I reckon."

After supper, we strolled again into the barroom. Approaching the counter, my eye fell on the hotel register, which lay open upon it. I glanced involuntarily over the book. Among the arrivals of the previous day, I noticed two recorded in a hand that I at once recognized. The names were, "JOHN HALLET, *New Orleans;* JACOB LARKIN, *ditto.*"

"Are these gentlemen here?" I asked the bartender.

"No; they left same day the' come."

"Where did they go?"

"Doan't know."

In five minutes, with my carpet bag strapped to the pommel of the saddle, I was bounding up the road to Trenton.

It was nearly ten o'clock when I sprang from the horse, and rang the bell at the mansion. A light was burning in the library, but the rest of the house was dark. A negro opened the door.

"Where is Master Joe, or Miss Selly?"

"In de library, massa. I'll tell dem you'm yere."

"No; I'll go myself. Look after my horse."

I strode through the parlors and the passage way to the old room. Selma was seated on a lounge by the side of Joe, her

Digitized by Google

head on his shoulder. As I opened the door, I spoke the two words: "My child!"

She looked up, sprang to her feet, and rushed into my arms.

"And you are safe!" I cried, putting back her soft brown hair, and kissing her pale, beautiful forehead.

"Yes, I am safe. My brother is here—I am *safe*."

"Joe—God bless you!—you're a noble fellow!"

He was only twenty-three, but his face was already seamed and haggard, and his hair thickly streaked with white! We sat down, and from Selma's lips I learned the events of the preceding months.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXV.

TRUTH THAT IS STRANGER THAN FICTION.

SELMA arrived at home about a week after her father's funeral. The affairs of the plantation were going on much as usual, but Mrs. Preston was there in apparently the greatest grief. She seemed inconsolable; talked much of her loss, and expressed great fears for the future. Her husband had left no will, and nothing would remain for her but the dower in the real estate, and that would sell for but little.

The more Preston's affairs were investigated, the worse they appeared. He was in debt everywhere. An administrator was appointed, and he decided that a sale of everything —the two plantations and the negroes—would be necessary.

Selma felt little interest in the pecuniary result, but sympathy for her stepmother induced her to remain at home, week after week, when her presence there was no longer of service. At last she made preparations to return; but, as she was on the point of departure, Mrs. Preston—whose face then wore an expression of triumphant malignity which chilled Selma's very life-blood—told her that she could not go; that she was a part of her father's estate, and must remain, and be sold with the other negroes!

Dawsey, shortly prior to this, had become a frequent visitor

Digitized by Google

at the plantation; and, the week before, Phyllis had been dreadfully whipped under his supervision. Selma interceded for her, but could not avert the punishment. She did not at the time know why it was done, but at last the reason was revealed to her.

Among the papers of the first Mrs. Preston, the second wife had found a bill of sale, by which, in consideration of one gold watch, two diamond rings, an emerald pin, two gold bracelets, some family plate, and other jewelry, of the total value of five hundred dollars, General ———, of Newbern, had conveyed a negro girl called "Lucy," to Mrs. Lucy Preston, wife of Robert Preston, Esq. Said girl was described as seven years old, light complexioned, with long, curly hair, of a golden brown; and the child of Phyllis, otherwise called Phyllis Preston, then the property of Jacob Larkin.

Mrs. Preston inquired of Phyllis what had become of the child. The nurse denied all knowledge of it; but Selma's age, her peculiar hair, and her strong resemblance to Rosey, excited the Yankee woman's suspicions, and she questioned the mother more closely. Phyllis still denied all knowledge of her child, and, for that denial, was whipped—whipped till her flesh was cut into shreds, and she fainted from loss of blood. After the whipping, she was left in an old cabin, to live or die—her mistress did not care which; and there Ally found her at night, on his return from his work in the swamp. Wrapping her mangled body in an oiled sheet, he conveyed her to his cabin. Dinah carefully nursed her, and ere long she was able to sit up. Then Mrs. Preston told her that, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered to live through it, she would be again and again beaten, till she disclosed the fate of the child.

Digitized by Google

She still denied all knowledge of it; but, fearing the rage of her mistress, she sent for her husband, then keeping a small groggery at Trenton, four miles away. He came, and had a conference with Ally and Dinah about the best way of saving his wife from further abuse. Phyllis was unable to walk or to ride, therefore flight was out of the question. Ally proposed that Mulock should oversee his gang for a time, while he remained about home, and kept watch over her. None of the negroes could be induced to whip her in his presence; and if Dawsey or any other white man attempted it, he was free —he would meet them with their own weapons. Mulock agreed to this, and the next day went to the swamp.

Learning of his presence on the plantation, the mistress sent for him, and, by means of a paltry bribe, induced him to reveal all! Selma thought he loved Phyllis as much as his brutal nature was capable of loving, and that he betrayed her to save her mother from further ill usage.

The next morning, four strong men entered Ally's cabin before he had left his bed, bound him hand and foot, and dragged Phyllis away, to be again whipped for having refused to betray Selma. Unable to stand, she was tied to a stake, and unmercifully beaten. Weak from the effects of the previous whipping, and crushed in spirit by anxiety for her child, nature could no longer sustain her. A fever set in, and, at the end of a week, she died.

Selma was told of their relation to each other. The nurse, so devotedly attached to her, and whom she had so long loved, was her own mother! She learned this only in time to see her die, and to hear her last blessing.

Then Selma experienced all the bitterness of slavery. She

Digitized by Google

was set at work in the kitchen with the other slaves. It seemed that Mrs. Preston took especial delight in assigning to the naturally high-spirited and sensitive girl the most menial employments. Patiently trusting in God that He would send deliverance, she endeavored to perform, uncomplainingly, her allotted tasks. Wholly unaccustomed to such work, weary in body and sick at heart, she dragged herself about from day to day, till at last Mrs. Preston, disgusted with her "laziness," as she termed it, directed her to be taken to the quarters and beaten with fifty lashes!

Ally had been ordered away by the mistress, and that morning had gone to Trenton to consult the administrator, and get his permission to stay on the plantation. That gentleman—a kind-hearted, upright man—not only told him he could remain, but gave him a written order to take and keep Selma in his custody.

He returned at night, to find she had been whipped. His blood boiling with rage, he entered the mansion, and demanded to see her. Mrs. Preston declined. He then gave her the order of the administrator. She tore it into fragments, and bade him leave the house. He refused to go without Selma, and quietly seated himself on the sofa. Mrs. Preston then called in ten or twelve of the field hands, and told them to eject him. They either would not or dared not do it; and, without more delay, he proceeded to search for Selma. At last he found her apartment. He burst open the door, and saw her lying on a low, miserable bed, writhing in agony from her wounds. Throwing a blanket over her, he lifted her in his arms, and carried her to his cabin. Dinah carefully attended her, and that night she thanked God, and—slept.

Digitized by Google

The next morning, before the sun was fully up, Dawsey and three other white men, heavily armed, came to the cabin, and demanded admittance. Ally refused, and barricaded the door. They finally stealthily effected an entrance through a window in the kitchen, and, breaking down the communication with the "living room," in which apartment the mulatto man and his mother were, they rushed in upon them. Ally, the previous day, had procured a couple of revolvers at Trenton, and Dinah and he, planting themselves before the door of old Deborah's room, in which Selma was sleeping, pointed the weapons at the intruders. The assailants paused, when Dawsey shouted out: "Are you afraid of two d—d niggers—and one a woman!" Aiming his pistol at Ally, he fired. The ball struck the negro's left arm. Discharging two or three barrels at them, the old woman and her son then rushed upon the white men, and they FLED! all but one—he remained; for Dinah caught him in a loving embrace, and pummelled him until he might have been mistaken for calves-foot jelly.

Ally then sent a messenger to the administrator, who rode over in the afternoon, and took Selma to his own house. There she remained till her brother reached the plantation—three days before my arrival.

As soon as she was safely at Trenton, Selma wrote to her friends, mailing the letters at that post office. She received no answers. Again and again she wrote; the administrator also wrote, but still no replies came. At last Ally suggested mailing the letters at Newbern, and rode down with one to Joe, one to Alice, and one to Kate.

Her brother came on at once. In the first ebullition of his anger he ejected his stepmother from the mansion. She went

Digitized by Google

to Dawsey's, and, the next day, appeared at the sale with that gentleman; and then announced that for two months she had been the woman-whipper's wife.

Dawsey had bought the plantation, and most of the furniture, the day before, and had said he intended to buy all of the "prime" negroes.

As Selma concluded, Joe quietly remarked:

"He'll be disappointed in that. I allowed him the plantation and furniture, because I've no use for them; but I made him pay more than they are worth. The avails will help me through with father's debts; but not a single hand shall go into his clutches. I shall buy them myself."

"What will you do with them?"

"I have bought a plantation near Mobile. I shall put them upon it. Joe will manage them, and I'll live there with Selly."

"You're a splendid fellow, Joe. But it seems a pity that woman should profane your father's house."

"Oh! there's no danger of that. I've engaged 'furnished apartments' for her elsewhere."

"What do you mean?"

"The sheriff is asleep up stairs. He has a warrant against her for the murder of Phyllis. When she comes here in the morning, it will be served!"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NEGRO SALE.

THE next morning I rose early, and strolled out to the negro quarters. At the distance of about a hundred yards from the mansion, the sun was touching the tops of about thirty canvas camps, and, near them, large numbers of horses, "all saddled and bridled," were picketed among the trees. Some dozens of "natives" were littered around, asleep on the ground; and here and there a barelegged, barefooted woman was lying beside a man on a "spring" mattrass, of the kind that is supposed to have been patented in Paradise.

It was a beautiful morning in May, and one would have thought, from the appearance of the motley collection, that the whole people had "come up to worship the Lord in their tents," after the manner of the Israelites. The rich planter, the small farmer, the "white trash"—all classes, had gathered to the negro sale, like crows to a feast of carrion.

A few half-awake, half-sober, russet-clad, bewhiskered "gentry," were lighting fires under huge iron pots; but the larger portion of the "congregation" was still wrapped in slumber.

Passing them, I knocked at the door of Ally's cabin. The family was already astir, and the various members gave me a

Digitized by Google

greeting that cannot be *bought* now anywhere with a handful of "greenbacks." Boss Joe, Aggy, and old Deborah had arrived, and were quartered with Ally.

"An' 'ou wusn't a gwine ter leff massa Preston's own chile be sole widout bein' yere; wus 'ou, massa Kirke?" cried Dinah, her face beaming all over with pleasurable emotion.

"No, Dinah; and I've come here so early to tell you how much I think of *you*. A woman that can handle four white men as you did, is fit to head an army."

"Lor' bress 'ou, massa! dat wusn't nuffin'. I could handle a whole meetin'-house full ob sech as dem."

"Joe, you know your master's plans, I suppose?"

"Yas, massa Kirke; he mean ter buy all de folks."

"But can he raise money enough for the whole?"

"I reckon so. Massa Joe got a heap."

"But don't you want to borrow some to help out your pile?"

"I'se 'bliged ter you, sar; but I reckon I doan't. I'se got nigh on ter free thousan', an' nary one'll pay more'n dat fur a ole man an' two ole wimmin."

"I hope not."

I remained there for a half hour, and then strolled back to the mansion. On the lawn, at the side of the house, was the auction block—the carpenter's bench which had officiated at Ally's wedding. It was approached by a flight of steps, and at one end was the salesman's stand—a high stool, in front of which was a small portable desk supported on stakes driven into the ground. Near the block was a booth fitted up for the special accommodation of thirsty buyers. The proprietor was just opening his own and his establishment's peepers, and I

Digitized by Google

looked in upon him. His red, bloated visage seemed familiar to me. Perceiving me, he said:

"How is ye, stranger? Hev a eye-opener?"

"I reckon not, old fellow; but I ought to know you. Your name is Tom."

"Thomas, stranger; but Tom, fur short."

"Well, Thomas, I thought you had taken your last drink. I saw your store was closed, as I came along."

"Yas; th' durned 'ristocrats driv me out uv thet nigh a yar ago."

"And where are you now?"

"Up ter Trenton. I'm doin' right smart thar. Me an' Mulock—thet used ter b'long yere—is in partenship. But whar moight ye hev seed me, stranger?"

"At your store, over ten years since. I bought a woman there. You were having a turkey match at the time."

"Oh, yas! I 'call ye now. An' th' pore gal's dead! Thet d—d Yankee 'ooman shud pull hemp fur thet."

"Yes; but the devil seldom gets his due in this world."

'Thet ar's a fact, stranger. Come, hev a drink; I woan't ax ye a red."

"No, excuse me, Tom; it's before breakfast;" and, walking off, I entered the mansion.

* * * * * *

Shortly after breakfast the people from the neighboring plantations began to gather to the sale, and, by the hour appointed for it to commence, about five hundred men and women had collected on the ground. Some were on horseback, some in carriages, but the majority were seated on the grass, or on benches improvised for the occasion.

Digitized by Google

A few minutes before the "exercises" commenced, the negroes were marched upon the lawn. No seats had been provided for them, and they huddled together inside a small area staked off for their reception. They were of all colors and ages. Husbands and wives, parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, aunts, uncles, and cousins, gathered in little family groups, and breathlessly awaited the stroke of the hammer which was to decide their destiny. They were all clad in their Sunday clothes, and looked clean and tidy; but on every face except Joe's was depicted an ill-defined feeling of dread and consternation. Husbands held their wives in their arms, and mothers hugged their children to their bosoms, as if they might soon part forever; but when old Joe passed among them, saying a low word to this one and the other, their cloudy visages brightened, and a heavy load seemed to roll off their hearts. Joe was as radiant as a summer morning, and walked about with a quiet dignity and unconcern that might have led one to think him the owner of the entire "invoice of chattels."

As the auctioneer—a spruce importation from Newbern—mounted the bench, a splendid carriage, drawn by two magnificent grays, and driven by a darky in livery, made its way through the crowd, and drew up opposite the stand. In it were Dawsey and his wife!

The salesman's hammer came down. "Gentlemen and ladies," he said, "the sale has commenced. I am about to offer you one hundred and sixty-one likely negro men and women, belonging to the estate of Robert Preston, Esq., deceased. Each one will be particularly described when put up, and all will be warranted as represented. They will be

Digitized by Google

sold in families; that is, husbands and wives, and parents and young children, will not be separated. The terms are, one quarter cash, the balance in one year, secured by an approved indorsed note. Persons having claims against the estate will be allowed to pay by authenticated accounts and duebills. The first lot I shall offer you will be the mulatto man Joe and his wife Agnes. Joe is known through all this region as a negro of uncommon worth and intelligence. He is——"

Here he was interrupted by Dawsey, who exclaimed, in a hurried manner:

"I came here expecting this sale would be conducted according to custom—that each hand would be put up separately. I protest against this innovation, Mr. Auctioneer."

The auctioneer made no reply; but the administrator, a small, self-possessed man, mounted the bench, and said:

"Sir, *I* regulate this sale. If you are not satisfied with its conditions, you are not obliged to bid."

Dawsey made a passionate reply. In the midst of it, Joe sprang upon the stand, and, in a clear, determined voice, called out:

"Mr. Sheriff, do your duty."

A large, powerful man, in blue coat and brass buttons, stepped to the side of the carriage, and, coolly opening the door, said:

"Catherine Dawsey, you are charged with aiding and abetting in the murder of Phyllis Preston. I arrest you. Please come with me."

"By ——, sir!" cried Dawsey; "this lady is my wife!"

"It makes no difference whose wife she is, sir. She is my prisoner."

Digitized by Google

"She must not be touched by you, or any other man!" yelled Dawsey, drawing his pistol. Before he could fire, he rolled on to the ground, insensible. The sheriff had struck him a quick blow on the head with a heavy cane.

As her husband fell, Mrs. Dawsey sprang upon the driver's seat, and, seizing the reins from the astonished negro, applied the lash to the horses. They reared, and started. The panic-stricken crowd parted, like waves in a storm, and the spirited animals bounded swiftly down the avenue. They had nearly reached the cluster of liveoaks which borders the small lake, when a man sprang at their heads. He missed them, fell, and the carriage passed over him; but the horses shied from the road into the trees, and in an instant the splendid vehicle was a mass of fragments, and Mrs. Preston and the negro were sprawling on the ground. The lady was taken up senseless, and badly hurt, but breathing. The driver was dead!

The crowd hurried across the green to the scene of disaster. Joe and I reached the man in the road at the same instant. It was Ally! We took him up, bore him to the edge of the pond, and bathed his forehead with water. In a few minutes he opened his eyes.

"Are you much hurt, Ally?" asked Joe, with almost breathless eagerness.

"I reckon not, massa Joe," said Ally; "my head, yere, am sore, an' dis ankle p'raps am broke. Leff me see;" and he rose to his feet, and tried his leg. "No, massa Joe; it'm sound's a pine knot. I hain't done fur *dis* time."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Joe, with an indescribable expression of relief.

Mrs. Dawsey was borne to the mansion, the negro carried

Digitized by Google

off to the quarters, and, in a few moments, the crowd once more gathered around the auctioneer's stand. Dawsey, by this time recovered from the sheriff's blow, was cursing and swearing terribly over the disaster to his wife and—his property.

"Twenty-five hundred dollars gone at a blow! D—n the woman; didn't she know better than that?"

As he followed his wife into the house, the sheriff said to the administrator, who was a justice of the peace:

"Make me out a warrant for that man—obstructing the execution of the law."

The warrant was soon made out, and in fifteen minutes, Dawsey, raving like a wild animal, was driven off to jail at Trenton. Mrs. Preston, too much injured to be moved, was left under guard at the mansion, and the sale proceeded.

Boss Joe and Aggy ascended the block, and "Master Joe" took a stand beside them.

"How much is said for these prime negroes?" cried the auctioneer. "Everybody knows what they are, and there's no use preaching a sermon over them. Boss Joe might do that, but *I* can't. He can preach equal to any white man you ever hard. Come, gentlemen, start a bid. How much do you say?"

"A thousand," said a voice in the crowd.

"Eleven hundred," cried another.

"It's a d—d shame to bid on them, gentlemen. Boss Joe has been saving money to buy himself; and I think no white man should bid against him," cried a man at my elbow.

It was Gaston, who had just arrived on the ground.

"Thet's a fact." "Them's my sentiments." "D—n th'

Digitized by Google

man thet'll bid agin a nigger." "Thet's so, Gaston," echoed from all directions.

"But I yere th' darky's got a pile—some two thousan'; *thet* gwoes 'long with him, uv course," yelled one of the crowd.

"Of course it don't!" said young Joe, from the stand. "He's saved about three thousand out of a commission his master allowed him; but he *gave* that *to me*, long before my father died. It is *mine*—not *his*. I bid twelve hundred for him and his wife; and I will say to the audience, that I shall advance on whatever sum may be offered for them. So fire away, gentlemen; I ask no favors."

"Is there any more bid for this excellent couple?" cried the auctioneer. "It is my duty to cry them, and to tell you they're worth twice that money."

There was no more bid, and Boss Joe and Aggy were struck down at twelve hundred dollars—about two thirds their market value.

"Now, gentlemen, we will offer you the old negress, Deborah, the mother of Joe. Bring her forward!" cried the man of the hammer.

Four strong negroes lifted the chair of the aged African, and bore her to the block. When the strange vehicle reached the steps, young Preston steadied it into its appropriate position, and then took a stand beside it.

"This aged lady, gentlemen, is warranted over eighty; she may be a hundred. She can't walk, but she can pray and sing to kill. How much is bid for all this piety done up in black crape?" cried the auctioneer, smiling complacently, as if conscious of saying a witty thing.

Digitized by Google

Joe turned on him quickly. "Sir, you are employed to *sell* these people, not to sport with their feelings. Let me hear no more of this."

"No offence, Mr. Preston. Gentlemen, how much is bid for old Deborah?"

"Five dollars," said young Preston.

The old negress, who sat nearly double, straightened up her bent form, and, looking at Joe with a sad, pleading expression, exclaimed:

"Oh, massa Joe! olé nussy 'm wuth more'n dat. 'Ou woan't leff har be sole fur no sech money as dat, will 'ou, massa Joe?"

"No, aunty; not if you want to bring more. I'd give your weight in gold for you;" and, turning to the auctioneer, he said: "A hundred dollars is my bid, sir."

"Bress 'ou, massa Joe! bress 'ou! 'Ou'm my own dear, bressed chile!" exclaimed the old negress, clutching at his hand, and, with a sudden effort, rising to her feet. She stood thus for a moment, then she staggered back, fell into her chair, uttered a low moan, and—was FREE!

A wild excitement followed, during which the body was borne off. It was a full half hour before quiet was restored and the sale resumed. Then about twenty negroes, of both sexes, were put up singly. All of them were bought by Joe, except a young woman, whose husband belonged to Gaston. The bidding on her was spirited, and she was run up to ten hundred and fifty dollars. As Gaston bid that sum, he jumped upon a bench, and called out:

"Gentlemen, I can stand this as long as you can. I mean to have this woman, anyhow."

Digitized by Google

No one offered more, and "the lot" was struck off to Gaston. Joe did not bid on her at all.

When the next negro ascended the stand, Joe beckoned to me, and said:

"Selly is next on the catalogue. Will you bring her here?"

As I entered the mansion, she met me. Her face was pale, and there was a nervous twitching about her mouth, but she quietly said:

"You have come for me?"

"Yes, my child. Have courage; it will soon be over."

She laid her head upon my shoulder for a moment; then, turning her large, clear, but tearless eyes up to mine, she said:

"I trust in GOD!"

I took her arm in mine, and walked out to the stand. The auctioneer was waiting for her, and we ascended the block together. A slight tremor passed over her frame as she met the sea of upturned faces, all eagerly gazing at her; and, putting my arm about her, I whispered:

"Do not fear. Lean on me."

"I do not fear," was the low reply.

"Now, gentlemen," cried the auctioneer, in an unfeeling, business-like way, "I offer you the girl, Lucy Selma. She is seventeen years old; in good health; well brought up—a superior lot every way. She has recently been employed at cooking, but, as you see, is better adapted to lighter work. How much shall I have for her? Come, bid fast, gentlemen; we are taking up too much time."

Before any response could be made to this appeal, Joe stepped to the side of Selma, and, in a slow, deliberate voice, bid:

Digitized by Google

"Gentlemen, allow me a few words. This young lady is my sister. I have always supposed—she has always supposed that she was the legitimate child of my father. She was not. My mother bought her when she was very young; gave her jewels—all she had—for her, and adopted her as her own child. The law does not allow a married woman to hold separate property, and Selma is therefore inventoried in my father's estate, and must be sold. Rightfully, she belongs to me! She has been delicately and tenderly reared, and is totally unfitted for any of the usual work of slave women. Her value for such purposes is very little. I shall bid a thousand dollars for her, which is more than she is worth for any honest use. If any man bids more, it is HIS LIFE OR MINE *before he leaves the ground!*"

A breathless silence fell on the assemblage. It lasted for a few moments, when Gaston called out:

"Come, Joe, this isn't fair. You've no right to interfere with the sale. I came here prepared to go twenty-five hundred for her myself."

In a firm but moderate tone, the young man replied:

"I intend no disrespect to you, Mr. Gaston, or to any gentleman present; but I mean what I say. I shall stand by my words!"

"Come, youngster, none uv yer browbeatin' yere. It woan't gwo down," cried a rough voice from among the audience. "I've come all th' way from Orleans ter buy thet gal; an' buy har I shill!"

Quite a commotion followed this speech. It lasted some minutes, and the speaker was the object of considerable attention.

Digitized by Google

"He's some on th' trigger, ole feller," cried one. "He kin hit a turkey's eye at two hundred paces, he kin," said another. "He'll burn yer in'ards, shore," shouted a third. "Ye'll speak fur warm lodgin's, ef ye bid on thet gal, ye wull," cried a fourth.

"Come, my friends, ye kain't skeer me," coolly said the first speaker, mounting one of the rough benches. "I've h'ard sech talk afore. It doan't turn *me* a hair. I come yere ter buy thet gal, an' buy har I shill, 'cept some on ye kin gwo higher'n my pile; an' my pile ar *eighty-two hundred dollars!*"

He was a tall, stoutly-built man, with bushy gray whiskers and a clear, resolute eye. It was Larkin!

Turning to Joe, I exclaimed:

"I understand this. Get the auctioneer to postpone the sale for half an hour. Take Selly into the house."

"No. It might as well be over first as last. Let him bid—he's a dead man!" replied Joe, coolly, but firmly.

"You're mad, boy. Would you take his life needlessly?"

The auctioneer, who overheard these remarks, then said to me:

"I will adjourn the sale, sir;" and, turning to the audience, he cried, drawing out his watch: "Gentlemen, it is twelve o'clock. The sale is adjourned for an hour, to give you a chance for dinner."

Joe led Selma away, and, springing from the block, I pressed through the crowd to where Larkin was standing.

"Larkin," I said, placing my hand on his arm, "come with me."

"Who in h— ar ye?" he asked, turning on me rather roughly.

Digitized by Google

"My name is Kirke. You ought to know me."

"Kirke! Why, ye ar! I'm right down glad ter see ye, Mr. Kirke," he exclaimed, seizing me warmly by the hand.

"Come with me; I want to talk with you."

He sprang from the bench, and followed me into the mansion.

Entering the library, I locked the door. When he was seated, I said:

"Now, Larkin, who do you want this girl for?"

"Wall, I swar! Mr. Kirke, ye fire right at th' bull's eye!" Then, hesitating a moment, he added:

"Fur myself."

"No, you don't; you know that isn't true."

"Ha! ha! This ar th' second time ye've told me I lied. Nary other man ever done it twice, Mr. Kirke; but I karn't take no 'fence with ye, nohow—ha! ha!"

"Come, Larkin, don't waste time. Tell me squarely—*who* do you want this girl for?"

"Wall, Mr. Kirke, I can't answer thet—not in honor."

"Shall *I* tell *you?*"

"Yas, ef ye kin!"

"John Hallet."

"Wall, I'm d—d ef ye doan't take th' papers. Who in creashun told ye thet?"

"No one; I *know* it. Hallet's only son is engaged to this girl. He wants her, to balk him."

"Ye're wrong thar. He wants har fur *himself*."

"For himself!"

"Yas; he's got a couple now. He's a sly old fox; but he's one on 'em."

Digitized by Google

"Is he willing to pay eighty-two hundred dollars for a mistress?"

"Wall, Preston owes him a debt, an' he reckons 'tain't wuth a hill o' beans. Thet's th' amount uv it."

Thus the wrong of the father was to be atoned for by the dishonor of the child! Preston was right: the curse which followed his sin had fallen on all he loved—on his wife, his mistress, the octoroon girl, his manly, noble son; and now, the cloud which held the thunderbolt was hovering over the head of his best-loved child! And so He visiteth "the sins of the fathers upon the children!"

"But he is wrong! Preston's estate will pay its debts. If it does not, Joe will make good the deficiency. I will guarantee Hallet's claim. See him, and tell him so."

"He hain't yere, an' woan't be yere. He allers fights shy. An' 'twouldn't be uv no use. He's made up his mind to hev th' gal, an' hev har he will. He's come all th' way from Orleans ter make shore uv it."

"But, Larkin, you've a heart under your waistcoat; *you* won't lend yourself to the designs of such a consummate scoundrel as Hallet!"

"Scoundrel's a hard word, Mr. Kirke. 'Tain't used much round yere; when it ar, it draws blood like a lancet."

"I mean no offence to you, Larkin; but it's true—I will prove it;" and I went on to detail my early acquaintance with Hallet; his vast profession and small performance of piety; his betrayal of Frank's mother; his treatment of his son, and all the damning record I have spread before the reader.

As I talked, Larkin rose, and walked the room, evidently affected; but, when I concluded, he said:

Digitized by Google

"'Tain't no use, Mr. Kirke; I'd ruther ye wouldn't say no more. It makes me feel like the cholera. An' 'tain't no use! I've *got* ter buy th' gal."

"You have *not* got to buy her! You need only go away. I will give you a thousand dollars, if you will go at once."

"No, no, Mr. Kirke; I karn't do it. I'd like ter 'blige ye, and I need money like th' devil; but I karn't leave Hallet in th' lurch. 'Twouldn't be far dealin' 'tween man an' man. He trusts me ter do it, an' I'm in with him. I *must* act honest."

"How *in* with him?"

"Why, he an' ole Roye ar tergether. The' find th' money fur my bis'ness—done it fur fifteen yar. The' git th' biggest sheer, but I karn't holp myself. I went inter cotton, like a d—d fool, 'bout a yar ago, an' lost all I hed—every red cent; an' now I shud be on my beam ends ef it warn't fur them."

"Then Hallet has made his money dealing in negroes!"

"Yas, a right smart pile, in thet, an' cotton. He got me inter th' d—d staple. I hed nigh on ter sixty thousan' then —hard rocks; but I lost it all—every dollar—at one slap; though I reckon *he* managed, somehow, ter git out."

"Yes, of course *he* got out, and saddled the loss upon you. Were you such a fool as not to see that?"

"P'raps he did; but he covered his trail. He's smart; ye karn't track *him*. But it makes no odds; I *hev* ter keep in with him. I couldn't do a thing, ef I didn't."

"Yes, you could. Come North. I'll give you honest work to do."

"You're a gentleman, Mr. Kirke, an' I'm 'bliged ter ye;

Digitized by Google

but I karn't leave yere. I've got a wife an' chil'ren, an' the' wouldn't live 'mong ye abolitionists, nohow."

"You have a wife and children?"

"Yas; a wife, an' two as likely young 'uns as ye ever seed—boy 'bout seven, an' gal 'bout twelve."

"Well, Larkin, suppose *your* little girl was upon that auction block; suppose some villain had hired *me* to aid in debauching her; suppose you, her father, should come to me and plead with me not to do it; suppose I should tell you what you have told me, and then—should go out and buy *your* child; what would you do? Would you not curse me with your very last breath?"

He seated himself, and hung down his head, but made no reply.

"Answer me, like the honest man you are."

"Wall, I reckon I shud."

"Selma is to marry my adopted son. She is as dear to me as your child is to you. Can you do to her, what you would curse me for doing to *your* child? Look me in the face. Don't flinch—answer me!"

I rose, and stood before him. In a few moments he also rose, and, looking me squarely in the eye—there was a tear in his—he brought his hand down upon mine with a concussion that might have been heard a mile off, and said:

"No, I'm d—d ter h— ef I kin."

"You are a splendid, noble fellow, Larkin."

"Ye're 'bout th' fust man thet ever said so, Mr. Kirke. Ye told me suthin' like thet nigh on ter twelve yar ago. I hain't forgot it yit, an' I never shill."

"You're rough on the outside, Larkin, but sound at the

Digitized by Google

core—sound as a nut. I wish the world had more like you. Leave this wretched work!"

"I'd like ter, but I karn't. What kin a feller do, with neither money nor friends?"

"Get into some honest business. I know you can. I'll help you—Joe will help you. We'll talk things over to-night, and I know Joe will rig out something for you."

He remained seated for a while, saying nothing; then he rose, and, the moisture dimming his eyes, said:

"I reckon ye're not over pious, Mr. Kirke, an' I *know* ye'd stand a hand at a rough an' tumble; but d—d ef thet hain't th' sort o' religion I like. Come, sir; ef I stay yere, ye'll make a 'ooman on me."

As we passed into the parlor, I said to Joe, who was seated there with Selma:

"Give Larkin your hand, Joe; he's a glorious fellow."

"My *heart* is in it, Larkin," said the young man, very cordially. "It would have come hard to draw a bead on *you*."

"I knows it would, Joe, an' I wus ter blame; but I never could stand a bluff."

We passed out together to the auction stand. Selma and her brother ascended the block, while Larkin and I mingled with the buyers, who had collected in even larger numbers than before. The auctioneer brought down his hammer:

"Attention, gentlemen! The sale has begun. I offer you again the girl, Lucy Selma. You've h'ard the description, and (glancing at Joe, and smiling) you know the *conditions* of the sale. A thousand dollars is bid for the girl, Lucy Selma; do I hear any more? Talk quick, gentlemen; I

Digitized by Google

shan't dwell on this lot; so speak up, if you've anything to say. One thousand once—one thousand twice—one thousand third and last call. Do I hear any more?" A pause of a moment. "Last call, gentlemen. Going—g-o-i-n-g—go——"

The word was unfinished; the hammer was descending, when a voice called out:

"Two thousand!"

"Whose bid is that?" cried Joe, striding across the bench, the glare of a hyena in his eyes.

"Mine, sir!" said the man, with a look of sudden surprise. His face was shaded by a broad-brimmed Panama hat, and his hair and whiskers were dyed, but there was no mistaking his large, eagle nose, his sharp, pointed chin, and his rat-trap of a mouth. It was Hallet!

Springing upon a bench near by, I cried out:

"John Hallet, withdraw that bid, or your time has come! I warn you. You cannot leave this place alive!"

He gave me a quick, startled look—the look of a thief caught in the act—but said nothing.

"Who is he?" cried a dozen voices.

"A Yankee nigger-trader! A man that seduced and murdered the woman who should have been his wife; that cast out and starved his own child, and now would debauch this poor girl, who is to marry his only son!"

"Wall, he *ar* a han'some critter." "'Bout like th' Yankees gin'rally." "Clar him out!" cried several voices.

"If you allow him to bid here, you are as bad as he," I continued, unintentionally fanning the growing excitement.

"Wall, we woan't." "Pitch inter him!" "Douse him in th' pond!" "Ride him on a rail!" "Give him a coat

Digitized by Google

uv tar!" and a hundred similar exclamations rose from the crowd, which swayed toward the obnoxious man with a quick, tumultuous motion.

"He'm in de darky trade; leff de darkies handle him!" cried Ally, seizing Hallet by the collar, and dragging him toward the pond.

The face of the great merchant turned ghastly pale. Paralyzed with fear, he made no resistance.

Pressing rapidly through the crowd, and tossing Ally aside as if he had been a bundle of feathers, Larkin was at Hallet's side in an instant. Planting himself before him, and drawing his revolver, he cried out:

"Far play, gintlemen, far play. He's a cowardly scoundrel, but he shill hev far play, or my name hain't Jake Larkin!"

Instinctively the crowd fell back a few paces, and Larkin, with more coolness, continued:

"Th' only man yere thet's got ary thing ter say in this bis'ness ar Joe Preston; an' *he'll* guv even a Yankee far play. Woan't ye, Joe?" he cried. Then, turning quickly to his partner, he added: "Ye didn't know th' kunditions, Mr. Hallet, did ye? Speak quick."

"No—I—didn't know I was—giving offence," stammered Hallet, looking in the direction in which Larkin's eyes were turned.

Selma had taken the auctioneer's chair, and Joe stood, with folded arms, glaring on Hallet.

"Come, Joe," continued Larkin, "I've done ye a good turn ter-day. Let him off, an' put it ter my 'count."

"As you say, Larkin; but he must withdraw his bid, and leave the ground at once."

Digitized by Google

"I withdraw it, sir," said Hallet, in a cringing tone, clinging fast to the negro trader.

"Doan't hold on so tight, Mr. Hallet. Lord bless ye! nary one yere'll hurt ye; they'm gentler'n lambs—ha! ha! But when ye want anuther gal, doan't ye come *yere* fur yer darter-in-law—ha! ha!"

Putting his arm within Hallet's, he then attempted to press through the crowd; but the blood of the chivalry had risen, and, spite of Joe's remarks, they showed no inclination to let the Yankee off so cheaply. Forming a solid wall around him, they blocked Larkin's way at every turn, and cries of "Let him alone, Larkin!" "Cool him off, boys!" "Doan't ye spile th' fun, Larkin!" "Guv th' feller a little hosspitaplity!" echoed from all directions.

Putting up his revolver, Larkin turned to them, and said, in the mildest and blandest tone conceivable:

"Thet's right, boys—ye *orter* hev some fun; but this gintleman's sick. Doan't ye see how pale he ar? He couldn't stand it, nohow. But thar's a feller thet kin," pointing to Mulock, who stood looking on, at the outer edge of the crowd. "Ef ye're spilin' fur sport, ye moight try yer hand on him!"

"Yas, he'm de man!" cried Ally. "He holped whip de young missus. He telled on har fur twenty dollar. He'm de man!"

Mulock did not seem to realize, at once, that he was the subject of these remarks. The moment he did, he sprang out of the crowd, and darted off for the woods at the top of his speed. A hundred men followed him, with cries of "Mount, head him off!" "Five dollars ter th' man thet kotches him!" "Take him, dead or alive!"

Digitized by Google

Amid the universal excitement and confusion that followed, Larkin walked rapidly away with Hallet.

"You can heat the kettle, boys; Mulock can't run," cried Joe, from the platform. "But you must give him a fair trial."

"We'll do thet, never ye fear!" echoed a dozen voices.

"I nominate his friend, Mr. Gaston, for judge," said Joe.

"Gaston it is! Gaston it is!" "Mount the bench, Mr. Gaston!" shouted a hundred "natives."

Gaston got upon the auction stand, and said:

"I'll serve, gentlemen; but, before we select jurors, the sale must go on. Miss Preston is not sold yet."

"All right! all right! Hurry up, Mr. Hammerman!" shouted the crowd.

The auctioneer took his place:

"A thousand dollars is bid for this young lady. Going—going—*gone*, to Mr. Joseph Preston.

Selma put her arms about Joe's neck, and, in broken tones, said: "My brother! my dear brother!" Then she laid her head on his shoulder, and wept—wept unrestrainedly.

Who can fathom the untold misery she had endured within those two hours!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LYNCHING.

THE impromptu judge took his seat on the bench, and the excited multitude once more subsided into quiet. In about fifteen minutes a tumult arose in a remote quarter of the ground, and Mulock and his pursuers appeared in sight, shouting, screaming, and swearing in a decidedly boisterous manner. The most of the profanity—to the credit of the self-appointed *posse comitatus* be it said—was indulged in by the ex-overseer, who, with his clothes torn in shreds, and his face covered with blood, looked like the battered relic of a forty years' war. A red bandanna pinioned his arms to his sides, and a strong man at each elbow spurred his flagging footsteps by an occasional poke with a pine branch. Ally followed at a few paces, looking about as dilapidated as the culprit himself. To him evidently belonged the glory of the capture.

As they approached the stand, Gaston rose, and called out:

"Do not insult justice, by bringing the prisoner into court in this condition. Let his face be washed, his garments changed, and his wounds bound up, before he appears for trial. Dr. Rawson, I commission you special officer for the duty."

"I'm at your service, Major Gaston," said the doctor, stepping out from the crowd into the open semicircle in front of

Digitized by Google

the bench. "Will some one procure the loan of a coat, hat, and trousers at the mansion?"

Ally started for the needed clothing, and the physician led the way to the small lake. In about twenty minutes the volunteer officials returned with the criminal, clothed in a more respectable manner, and Gaston said to him:

"Prisoner, take your place."

Resistance was useless, and Mulock, with a slow step, and a sullen, dogged air, ascended the platform, and seated himself in the chair provided for him at its further extremity. Gaston sat at the other end, facing him; and four brawny "natives," with revolvers in their hands, took positions by his side.

"Silence in the court!" cried Gaston.

The noisy multitude became quiet, and the extempore official proceeded—with greater solemnity than many another judge of more regular appointment exhibits on similar occasions—to say:

"Prisoner, you are charged with two of the highest offences known to our laws; namely, with aiding and abetting an illegal and cruel assault on a white woman, and with procuring and inciting the murder of your own wife. You are about to be tried for these crimes by a jury of your countrymen; and I am appointed judge, that full and impartial justice may be done you. It shall be done. Counsel will be awarded you; and, that you may not be condemned by prejudiced men, you will be given the privilege of peremptory challenge against four out of every five of the jurors I shall nominate. I shall now proceed to name the jury, and you will signify your objection to those you do not approve. Thomas Murchison."

Digitized by Google

That gentleman came forward, and Mulock said:

"I take him."

"Godfrey Banks."

"He's inimy ter me."

The man stepped aside; and thus they proceeded, the prisoner taking full advantage of the liberty of choice allowed him, until, out of a panel of nearly sixty, twelve respectable, yeomanly-looking men had been selected. As each juror was approved of by the crowd (who had the final decision), he took a seat on a row of benches facing the "judge" and the prisoner. When the last one had taken his place, Gaston said:

"Prisoner, you have heard the charges against you; are you guilty, or not guilty? If you think proper to acknowledge your guilt of either or both the crimes with which you are charged, I shall feel it my duty to award you a lighter punishment."

"I hain't guilty uv 'ary one on 'em," said Mulock, without looking up.

"What legal gentleman will appear for the people?" cried Gaston, turning to the audience. Several sprigs of the law shot out from the multitude. "I accept *you*, Mr. Flanders. Who will act for the prisoner?"

Each one of the volunteers fell back, and no response came from any part of the ground. Mulock evidently was neither blessed nor cursed with many friends.

"Does no one appear for the prisoner? Gentlemen of the legal profession, I am sorry to see this reluctance to aid a defenceless man. Will not some one oblige *me*, by volunteering? I shall consider it a personal service," said Gaston.

Digitized by Google

Still no response was heard. At least five minutes passed, and the "judge's" face was assuming a look of painful concern, when Larkin approached the bench.

"Gintlemen," he said, "th' man hain't no friends, an' it's a d——d shame not ter come out fur a feller as stands alone. Ef I knowed lor, I'd go in fur him, ef he wus th' devil himself."

No one came forward in answer to even this appeal; and, turning on the crowd, while warm, manly scorn glowed on his every feature, the negro-trader cried out:

"Ye're a set uv d—d sneakin' hounds, every one on ye. Ye're wuss than th' parsons, an' the' hain't fit ter tote vittles ter a bar." Turning to the "judge," he added, in a more respectful tone: "I doan't know th' fust thing 'bout lor, Major Gaston, an' this man's nigh as mean a cuss as th' Lord ever made; but ef ye'll 'cept me, I'll go in fur him!"

"I will accept you, with pleasure. You're doing a gentlemanly thing, Mr. Larkin."

A murmur of applause went round the assemblage, as Larkin and the other counsel took seats near the jury.

The "judge" then rose, and said:

"Gentlemen of the Jury: You have engaged in a solemn office. You are about to try a fellow being for his life. It is a painful duty, but it is an obligation you owe to the community, and to yourselves, and you will not shrink from it. Society is held together by laws made to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. But, as *our* society is organized, there are some offences which our tribunals cannot reach. In such cases the people, from whom all laws proceed, have a right to take the law into their own hands.

Digitized by Google

"The prisoner is charged with crimes which, from the circumstances surrounding their commission, cannot be reached by regular courts of justice. They were witnessed by none but blacks, whose testimony, by our statutes, is not admissible. We, the people, therefore, are to try him; and, to get at the facts, we shall receive the evidence of negroes. You will judge for yourselves as to its credibility. If any doubt of the prisoner's guilt rests in your minds, you will give him the benefit of it, and acquit him; but if, on the other hand, you are fully persuaded that he committed either or both the crimes of which he is accused, you will convict him. *You* will patiently hear the testimony that may be presented; *I* will honestly and impartially give sentence, according to the decision at which you may arrive. The trial will now proceed."

The witnesses were then examined. Ally was the first one sworn. He deposed to the circumstances attending the whipping of Phyllis, and the assault on Selma; but, as his evidence was altogether hearsay—he not being present on either occasion—it was ruled out, as was also his account of the bribing of Mulock by the mistress.

Three other negroes were then called, and they proved that Mulock aided in dragging Selma to the whipping rack, and witnessed the beating; but they failed to show that he was privy to or participated in the assault on his wife. Others were examined, who saw parts of the two transactions, and then the testimony closed.

As the last witness left the stand, Gaston said:

"I shall allow the prisoner the benefit of the final appeal. The attorney for the people will now address the jury."

The lawyer, a young man of no especial brilliancy or

Digitized by Google

ability, rose, and, going rapidly over the testimony, drew the conclusion from it that Mulock had instigated the beating of both mother and daughter, and was therefore guilty of the assault and the murder, and should accordingly be punished with death.

The motive actuating him he held to be revenge on Preston, for having, long previously, debauched his wife Phyllis. This passion, held in check during Preston's lifetime by fear of the consequences which might follow its indulgence, had broken out after his death, and wreaked itself on the two defenceless women.

The gentleman's reasoning was not very cogent, but, what he lacked in logic, he made up in bitter denunciation of Mulock, who, according to his showing, was a little blacker than the prime minister of the lower regions.

As he took his seat, Larkin rose, and, addressing himself to both the jury and the multitude, spoke, as near as I can recollect, as follows:

"Gintlemen, this yere sort o' bis'ness is out uv my line. I'm not used ter speechifyin', an' I may murder whot's called good English; but I'd a durned sight ruther murder *thet*, then ter joodiciously, or ary other how, murder a human bein'; an' it's my private 'pinion *ye'll* murder Mulock, ef ye bring him in guilty uv death.

"A man hain't no right ter take human life, 'cept in self-defence. Even ef Mulock wus so bad as this loryer feller tries ter make him out—but he hain't, 'cause 'tain't in natur for a man ter be wuss than th' devil himself—ye'd hev no right ter stop his breath. Ye didn't guv it ter him; it doan't b'long ter ye, an' th' lor doan't 'low ye ter take what hain't

Digitized by Google

your'n. Ef ye does, it's stealin', an' I knows thet none on the gintlemen uv the jury ar so allfired mean as ter steal—'ticularly ter steal whot woan't be uv no sort o' use ter 'em, nohow.

"The loryer yere, hes spread hisself on Mulock's motive fur doin' this thing; 'sistin' thet fur seventeen yar he's ben a nussin' suthin—nussin' it as keerfully as a mother nusses her chil'ren. Now, young 'uns gin'rally walks when they's 'bout a yar old; but this one thet Mulock's ben a nussin' didn't git 'round till it wus seventeen; an' I reckon a bantlin' thet karn't gwo alone afore it's thet age, woan't never do much hurt ter nobody.

"But these hain't th' raal p'ints uv th' case. I'm loryer 'nuff ter tell ye, ye must gwo on th' evidence; an' thar hain't no evidence ter show thet Mulock hed ary thing ter do with th' whippin' uv his wife; an' th' *murder* wus in thet. He *did*—so th' nigs say, an' I reckon the' tells th' truth; an' thet's whot nary loryer kin do, ef he try; so ye sees, a *nig* is smarter nor a loryer. Wall, the nigs say he holped in whippin' th' white 'ooman; an', as 'torney fur th' *truth*, gintlemen, which I'm gwine in fur yere, I've got ter 'low it. He did aid an' 'bet, as the loryers call it, in thet, an' thet proves him 'bout as mean as a white man ever gits ter be; an', 'sides thet, he did *sell* har fur twenty dollars—a 'ooman thet even th' 'judge'—an' he *ar* a *judge* uv sech things—wus willin' ter pay twenty-five hun'red fur; he *did* sell har fur *twenty dollars;* an' thet proves him a fool! Now, fur bein' both mean an' a fool, I 'low he orter be punished. But doan't ye kill him, gintlemen! Guv it ter him 'cordin' ter his natur an' his merits. Just luk at him. Hev ye ever seed sech a face, an'

Digitized by Google

sech an eye as thet, in ary human bein'? Why, his eye ar jest like a snake's; an' it's nat'ral, ye knows, fur snakes ter crawl; the' karn't do nuthin' else, an' the' hain't ter blame fur it. No more ye karn't blame Mulock fur bein' whot he ar. So guv him a coat uv tar—a ride on a rail—a duckin' in th' pond—arything thet's 'cordin' ter his natur an' his merits; but doan't ye take 'way his *life!* Ef ye does thet, he's *lost*—LOST furever; fur, I swar ter ye, his soul ar so small, thet ef it wus once out uv his body, th' LORD himself couldn't find it, an' th' pore feller'd hev ter gwo wand'rin' 'round with nary whar ter stay, an' nary friends, aither in heaven or t'other place! So be easy with him, gintlemen. Guv him one more chance. Let him stay yere a spell longer, fur yere his soul may grow. An' it *kin* grow! Everything in natur grows—even skunks; an' who knows but Mulock may sprout out yit, an' grow ter be a MAN!

"I'se nuthin' more ter say, gintlemen, only this: Afore ye make up yer minds ter bring Mulock in guilty uv death, jest put yerselfs inter his place, an' ax yerselfs ef *ye'd* like ter hev a rope put 'round yer windpipe, as ye'd put it 'round his'n! Ef ye wudn't, jest remember, 'tain't manly ter use ary nother man in a how ye wudn't like ter be used yerselfs. I'm done."

Larkin was frequently interrupted, during the delivery of this address, by the loud shouts and laughter of the crowd; but, at its close, a perfect tornado of applause swept over the multitude, and a hundred voices called out:

"No; doan't ye hang him." "Give him one more chance." "Doan't gwo more'n the tar." "Larkin's a lor-yer, shore."

Digitized by Google

Amid these and similar exclamations, the jury retired to the little grove of live-oaks. In about fifteen minutes they returned to their seats.

"Gentlemen of the jury," said Gaston, "have you agreed on your verdict?"

"'Greed on one thing, Major Gaston," said the foreman, rising; "hain't on t'other."

"On what have you agreed?"

"On whippin' th' young 'ooman."

"What say you on that—guilty, or not guilty?"

"Guilty."

"And so say you all?"

"Yas, Major."

"How do you stand on the other charge?"

"Four gwo in fur guilty; th' rest on us think Jake Larkin 'bout right as ter hangin' on him."

"It is not for Mr. Larkin, or you, to say what shall be done with the prisoner. You are to decide whether he is or is not guilty of instigating the murder of his wife. You must retire again, until you agree upon that."

"'Twouldn't be uv no use, Major. We reckon he's mean 'nuff ter hev done it; but whether he done it, or no, we gwo fur givin' him a chance ter live."

"Ye're white men, I swar!" cried Larkin, springing from his seat, and grasping the hands of several of the jurors in turn.

"Take your seat, and observe order, Mr. Larkin," said the judge, smiling in spite of himself.

"All right," said Larkin; "ye're *some* as a judge, Major—'bout up ter me as a loryer, an' thet's sayin' a heap; so jest be easy on th' pore devil. *Do*, yer *Honor!*"

Digitized by Google

"Silence, sir!" said Gaston, laughing.

Larkin took his seat, and the "judge" continued:

"Prisoner, you have heard the verdict. Have you anything to say why sentence for aiding in the assault on the white lady should not now be passed upon you?"

"No, Major Gaston; I've nothin' ter say," said Mulock, dejectedly.

Gaston continued: "You have been tried by a jury of your own selection. They are unanimous in pronouncing you guilty of a cowardly and unwarrantable assault on a white woman. They evidently deem you guilty of the worse crime of abetting the murder of your own wife, and humane feelings only deter them from saying so. In these circumstances, I feel it my duty to award you a more severe punishment than I should have done had you been fully acquitted of the last charge. I shall therefore sentence you to be coated with warm tar, ducked, in that condition, three times in the pond, and then ridden on a rail to your shop at Trenton; and may this example of public indignation lead you to a better life in future. Mr. Larkin, I commission you to superintend the execution of the sentence."

"No, ye doan't, Major—yer *Honor*, I mean! I'll stand by, an' see Mulock hes far play; but I woan't do nary one's dirty work, I swar."

"Well, who will volunteer for the duty?" said Gaston, appealing to the audience.

About a score of "natives" offered themselves; but, fixing his eye on a stout, goodnatured-looking man, who had not volunteered, Gaston said:

"Won't *you* do it, Mr. Moore?"

Digitized by Google

"Yas, ter 'blige ye, Major, I will," replied the man.

The "judge" then pronounced the court adjourned, and the crowd escorted Mulock and the impromptu executioners to the site of the old distilleries. There an iron kettle filled with tar was already simmering over a light-wood fire, and, being divested of his borrowed plumage, Mulock was soon clad in a close-fitting suit of black. He was about to be led to the pond, when Ally appeared on the ground. Making his way through the crowd, he called out:

"De young missus doan't want dis ting to gwo no fudder. She'll 'sider it a 'tic'lar favor ef de gemmen'll leff Mulock gwo."

"We karn't let him off without consent uv the judge," said Mr. Moore.

A messenger was sent for Gaston, who soon appeared, and consented that further proceedings should be stopped. Mulock was at once released, and, coatless, hatless, and all but trouserless, he made his way through the hooting multitude, and left the plantation, a blacker, if not a wiser and a better man.

As we walked away from the "scene of execution," I said to the negro-trader:

"Larkin, you should have been a lawyer; you managed that thing admirably."

"Th' boys hed got thar blood up, an' I know'd I couldn't clar him. A man stands a sorry chance in sech a crowd, ef they's raally bent on mischief."

On the following morning the remainder of the negroes were purchased by Joe; and in the afternoon I was on my way home.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"DEAD! DEAD!"

As I was sitting in my library, late one evening, rather more than a month after the events recorded in the last chapter, a hasty ring came at the street door.

"Who can be calling so late?" said Kate. "Had *you* not better go?"

Drawing on my boots, I went to the door. As I opened it, my hand was suddenly seized, and a familiar voice exclaimed:

"What about Selly? How is she?"

"Lord bless you, Frank! is this you? How did you get here?"

"How is Selma? Tell me!"

"Safe and well—in Mobile, with Joe."

"Thank God! thank God for *that!*"

"How did you get here?"

"By the Africa; she's below. I managed to get up by a small boat. I *couldn't* wait."

"Well, go up stairs. Your mother is in the library."

After the first greeting had passed between Kate and the newcomer, he plied me with questions in regard to Selma. I told him all, keeping nothing back. Meanwhile, he walked the room, struggling with contending emotions—now joy, now

Digitized by Google

rage, now grief. He said nothing till I mentioned Hallet's connection with the affair; then he spoke, and his words came like the rushing of the tornado when it mows down the trees.

"That is the *one* thing too much. I have held back till now. Now he *dies!*"

"Don't say that, my son!" exclaimed Kate. "Leave him to his conscience, and to GOD. 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the LORD!'"

"Vengeance is MINE! Don't talk to me, mother! I want no sermons now!"

She looked at him sadly through her tears, and said:

"Have I deserved this of *you*, Frank?"

"Forgive me! forgive me, my mother!" and he buried his face in her dress, and wept—wept as he never did when a child.

A half hour passed, and no one spoke. Then he rose, and said to me:

"When did you hear from her last?"

"*I* had a letter yesterday; here it is," said Kate. "You see, she is expecting you."

He took it, and read it over slowly. All trace of his recent emotion had gone, and on his face was an expression I had never seen there before. For the first time I noticed his resemblance to his father!

"When will you go?" continued Kate.

"I don't know. I cannot, *now*."

"Why not *now?* What is there to prevent?"

"I must go home first. I must see Cragin."

"Cragin does not expect you for a fortnight," I said; "you can be back by that time."

Digitized by Google

"But I *cannot* go now!" and again he rose, and walked the room. "I'm not ready yet. My mind isn't made up." After a pause, he added: "Would you have me marry a slave—a woman of negro blood?"

"I would have you do as your feelings and your conscience dictate."

"You cannot love her, if you ask that question," said Kate, kindly, but sorowfully.

"I *do* love her. I love her better than man ever loved woman; but can I make her my *wife?* A negro wife! negro children!—ha! ha!" and he clasped his hands above his head, and laughed that bitter, hollow laugh, which is the sure echo of fearful misery within.

"I cannot advise you, my son. You must act, *now*, on your own judgment. I will only say, that through it all—when put at slave work—when bound to the whipping stake—when she stood on the auction block for two long hours—she was sustained *only* by trust in *you*. It is true—she told me so; and if you forsake her now, it will"——

"Kill her! I know it! I know it, O my GOD! my GOD!" and he groaned in agony—such agony as I never before saw rend the spirit of mortal man.

* * * * * *

The next morning he started for Mobile. Ten days afterward, the following telegram was handed me:

"Selma is dead. Frank is here, raving crazy. Come on at once. PRESTON."

That night I was on my way, and that day week I reached

Digitized by Google

Mobile. The first person I met, as I entered Joe's warehouse, was Larkin.

"Where is Joe?"

"Ter th' plantation. He's lookin' fur ye. I'll tote ye thar ter onst."

In half an hour we were on the road. We arrived just before dark, and at once I entered the mansion. Joe's hand was in mine in a moment.

"What caused this terrible thing?" I asked, hastily, eagerly.

"I don't know. When he arrived, Frank was low-spirited and moody, but very glad to see me. I brought him up here at once. He seemed overjoyed at meeting Selma, and would not let her go out of his sight for a moment. Still *he* appeared excited and uneasy, till I met him at the supper table. Then he was more like himself. I went with *them* into the parlor, and there conversed with Frank on business matters for fully two hours. We planned some shipments to Europe, and talked over sending Larkin to Texas to buy cattle for the New Orleans market. We agreed on it. I was to provide means, by keeping ninety-day drafts afloat on them (I'm short, just now, having paid out so much for the negroes), and they and I were to divide the profits with Larkin. Frank's head was as clear as a bell. I had no idea he was so good a business man. Well, about eight o'clock I left them together, and, a little after nine, went to bed. Selma's room is next to mine, and it couldn't have been later than eleven when I heard her go to it.

"The next morning she didn't come down as usual. I had a servant call her. She made no reply; but I thought noth-

Digitized by Google

ing of it, till half an hour afterward. Then I went up myself. I rapped repeatedly, but got no answer. Becoming alarmed, I sent a servant for an axe. Frank brought it up, and I battered down the door, and found her lying on the bed, dressed as usual, a half-empty bottle of laudanum beside her—DEAD!"

"My GOD! And Frank made her do it!"

"Don't say that. If he *did*, he is fearfully punished; he has suffered terribly."

"Where is he?"

"In the front room. He has raved incessantly. At first four men couldn't hold him. Somehow, he got a knife, and cut himself badly. I got it away, but he threw me in the struggle, and nearly throttled me. He's calmer now, and I've had him untied; but old Joe has to stay with him night and day. Nobody else can manage him."

We went into the room. Frank sat in one corner, pale, haggard, only the shadow of what he was but ten days before. His head was leaning against the wall, and he was gazing out of the window.

As I entered, "Boss Joe" came forward and greeted me, but neither of us spoke. Approaching Frank, I laid my hand on his shoulder.

"My boy, I have come for you."

He rose, and looked at me, a wild glare in his eyes.

"Well, it's high time; I've waited long enough. I'm ready. I don't deny it—I killed her. Make short work of it. I'd have saved you the trouble, but this infernal nigger told me I'd go to hell if I did it; and I know *she* isn't there. I want to see her again! I want her to forgive me—to forgive me! Oh! oh!" and he sank into his chair, and moaned piteously.

Digitized by Google

"He tinks you'm de sheriff, massa Kirke," whispered Joe.

I leaned over him. The tears started from my eyes, and fell on his face, as I said:

"You *will* see her again. She does pity and forgive you."

He sprang from his seat, and clutched my hands. "Do you believe it? Joe says so; but Joe is a nigger—and what does a *nigger* know?" Then, putting his mouth close to my ear, he added: "They told me *she* was one. It was false—false as hell; but"—and he threw his arms above his head, and groaned the rest—"but it made me say it. O my GOD! my GOD! it made me say it!" His head sank on my shoulder, and again he gave out those piteous moans.

"Have comfort, my boy. I know she loves and pities you *now!*"

He looked up. "Say that again! For the love of God say that again!"

"It is so! As sure as there's another life, it is so!"

He gazed at me fixedly for a few moments—then again commenced pacing the room.

"I wish I could believe it. But *you* ought to know; you look like a parson. You are a parson, aren't you?"

"Yes; I'm a parson. I *know* it is so!"

"Well, tell them to hurry up. I want to go to her at once—*now!* I can't live another week in this way. Tell them to hurry up."

"Yes, I will; and you'll go with me to-morrow, won't you?"

He gave me, again, a long, scrutinizing look. "You're the sheriff, aren't you?"

"Yes."

Digitized by Google

"Well, then, I'll go with you. But you must promise to make short work of it."

"Yes, yes; I'll promise that. But lie down, now, and be quiet. I'll be ready for you in the morning."

"Well, well, I'll try to be patient;" and he threw himself on the small cot in one corner of the room. "But you'll let old Joe stay with me, won't you?"

"Yes; certainly."

"Thank you, sir. Joe, bring me a cigar—that's a good fellow. You're the decentest nigger I ever knew. It's an awful pity you're black. They told me *she* was black. 'Twas an infernal lie! I know it, for I saw her last night, and she was whiter than any woman you ever saw. Black! Pshaw! nobody but the devil's black; and *she*—she's an angel NOW!"

As we passed out of the room, Joe said to me:

"Would you like to see Selma?"

"Have you kept her?"

"Yes; I knew you would want to see her."

He led the way up stairs to her chamber. In a plain, air-tight coffin, lay all that was left of the slave girl. Her hands were crossed on her bosom; her long, glossy, brown hair fell over her neck, and on her face was the look the angels wear. She seemed not dead, but sleeping!

As I turned away, Joe took my hand, and, while a nervous spasm passed over his face, he said:

"She was all that I had; but I—I forgive him!"

"And for that, GOD will forgive *you!*"

The next day we buried her.

* * * * * *

"Boss Joe" accompanied us to the North. We reached

Digitized by Google

home just after dark. When we entered the parlor, Frank gazed around with an eager, curious look, as if some familiar scene was returning to him. In a few moments Kate entered. She rushed to him, and clasped him in her arms. He took her face between his two hands, and looked long and earnestly at her. Then, dropping his head on her shoulder, and bursting into tears, he cried:

"My mother! O my mother!"

He had awoke. The terrible dream was over. From that moment he was himself.

What passed between him and Selma on that fatal evening, I never knew. He has not spoken her name since that night.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONCLUSION.

Mrs. Dawsey lay at the mansion, under guard, for several weeks. When finally able to be moved, she was conveyed to the "furnished apartments" bespoken for her by Joe. Her husband, after a short confinement in jail, was set at liberty, and then made strenuous efforts to effect his wife's release on bail. He did not succeed. Public feeling ran very high against her; and that, probably more than the fact that she was charged with an unbailable crime, operated to prolong her residence at the public boarding house kept for runaway slaves and common felons at Trenton.

At the next session of the "county court," after an imprisonment of four months, she was arraigned for trial. Owing to the death of Selma, Mulock was the only white witness against her. He told a straightforward story, the most rigid cross-examination not swerving him from it, and deposed to Dawsey's having attempted to bribe him to go away. His evidence was conclusive as to the prisoner's guilt; but her counsel, an able man, made so damaging an assault on his personal character, that the jury disagreed. Mrs. Dawsey was then remanded to jail to await a new trial, at the next sitting of the court.

Digitized by Google

Shortly after the trial, Mulock suddenly disappeared. Hearing of it, and suspecting he had been spirited away by Dawsey, Joseph Preston went to Trenton, and, procuring a judge's order for Mulock's arrest as an absconding witness, caused a thorough search to be made for him in Jones and the adjoining counties. He himself visited Chalk Level, in Harnett County, and there found him, living again with his white wife. That lady had previously won and lost a second spouse, but, it appeared, was then in such straits for another husband, that she was willing to take up with her own cast-off household furniture. Whether a new marriage ceremony was performed, or not, I never learned; but I have been reliably informed that Mulock complained bitterly of his wife for having defrauded him of twenty-five of the fifty dollars she had agreed to pay as consideration for his again sharing her "bed and board."

Mulock admitted having received four hundred dollars from Dawsey for absenting himself, and gave as excuse for accepting the bribe, his conviction that Mrs. Dawsey could not be found guilty on *his* testimony. After his arrest he was confined in the same jail with the "retired" schoolmistress.

The second trial was approaching; but, late on the night preceding the sitting of the court, the jailer's house—which adjoined and communicated with the prison—was forcibly entered by four armed men disguised as negroes. They bound and gagged the jailer, his wife, and two female servants, and, seizing the keys, entered the jail, and carried Mulock off by force. The keeper heard a desperate struggle, and it was supposed Mulock was foully dealt by. The footprints of four men were the next morning detected leading to a spot on the

Digitized by Google

bank of the river, where a boat appeared to have been moored; but there all traces were lost, and the overseer's fate is still shrouded in mystery.

Mrs. Dawsey, whose cell adjoined Mulock's, was not disturbed, but public suspicion connected her husband with the affair. There was, however, no evidence against him, and he went "unwhipt of justice."

The lady was arraigned for trial on the following day, but, no witnesses appearing against her, she was—after a tedious confinement of ten months—set at liberty. Thus, at last, she achieved "a plantation and a rich planter;" but her darling object in life—to lead and shine in society, for which her education and character peculiarly fitted her—she missed. With the exception of her brutal husband, an ignorant overseer, and a superannuated "schulemarm," imported from the North, she has no associates. Society has built up a wall about her, and, with the brand of Cain on her forehead, she is going through the world.

Larkin, after breaking off his connection with his "respectable" associates, descended from trading in human cattle, to trafficking in fourfooted beasts and all manner of horned animals. Joe offered him an interest in his business; but the negro-trader had too long led a roving life to be content with the dull routine of regular business. Young Preston, and Cragin, Mandell & Co., stipulating for a half of his profits, then furnished him a capital of fifty thousand dollars; and with that he embarked largely in "cattle driving." He bought in Texas, and sold in New Orleans, and did a profitable business until the breaking out of the rebellion. Since that event he has been an officer in the confederate army.

Digitized by Google

Frank remained at my house for a fortnight after his return from the South, and then, apparently restored, went to Boston. Business had grown distasteful to him, and he sought a dissolution with Cragin; but the latter prevailed on him to remain in the firm, and go to Europe. He continued there until news reached Liverpool of the fall of Fort Sumter, when he took the first steamer for home. Arriving in Boston, he at once effected a dissolution with Cragin, and then came on to New York to make his "mother" a short visit prior to entering the army. He expressed the intention of enlisting as a private, and I tried to dissuade him from it, by representing how readily he could raise a company in Boston, and go as an officer.

"No," he replied; "I know nothing of tactics. I am unfit to lead; I can only fire a musket. With one on my shoulder, I will go, and sell my life as dearly as I can."

On the 18th of May, 1861, he left New York, as a private in Duryee's Zouaves (5th Regiment N. Y. V.), and on the 10th of June following, while fighting bravely by the side of York, Winthrop, and Greble, at Big Bethel, fell, badly wounded by a musket ball.

When he was fit to be moved, I had him conveyed home. His recovery was slow, but, as soon as he was able to go out, and still suffering from his wound, he went on to Boston to render Cragin some assistance in his business. General Butler's expedition was then fitting out for New Orleans. Weak as he was, Frank raised a company of Boston boys for it, and went off as their captain.

He was present at the bombardment and capture of New Orleans; but, growing weary of the inactivity which followed

Digitized by Google

those events, and hearing of the stirring times in Tennessee, he resolved to resign his commission, and seek service in the Western army.

After his resignation had been accepted, and on the eve of his departure for the North, as he was returning one night to his lodgings, he was accosted by a woman of the street. Her face seemed familiar, and he asked her name. She answered, "Rosey Preston." He went with her to her home—a miserable room in the third story of a tumbledown shanty in Chartres street—and there found her child, a bright little fellow of about six years. With them, on the following day, he sailed for the North.

Arriving here, he settled on Rosey the income of a small sum, and procured her apartments in a modest tenement house in East Thirtieth street. There she now works at her needle, and the little boy attends a public school.

Within the week of Frank's arrival, and when he was about setting out for the West, I was surprised, one morning, by Ally's appearance in my office. Newbern had fallen, and he had made his way, with his mother, into the Union lines, and, after a good deal of difficulty, had secured passage on a return transport to New York. I provided employment for Dinah, but Ally insisted on going into the war with Frank. He went as his servant, but fought at his side at Lawrenceburgh, Dog Walk, Chaplin Hills, and Frankfort, and in three of those engagements was wounded. His bones now whiten the plains of Tennessee. Rosey he never met, and never forgave.

Frank was with that small body of regulars at Murfreesborough, who, on the 31st of December, checked the advance

Digitized by Google

of Hardee's corps after McCook's division had been driven from the field, and saved the day. He was wounded in the arm, early in the morning, but kept the field, and joined in that heroic movement when fifteen hundred men marched through an open field, and charged upon a body of ten thousand posted in a dense grove of cedars. Six hundred and forty-six of the brave band were left on the field. Frank was among them. A Belgian ball pierced his left side, and came out at his back. He saw and recognized the man who gave the wound, and, raising himself on his elbow, fired a last shot. It did its work. The rebel lies buried on the spot where Frank fell.

The telegram which informed me of this event, said: "He is desperately wounded, but may survive." He is now at home, slowly recovering. What he saw and did while serving in Kentucky and Tennessee, I may at some future time narrate to the reader.

In relating actual events, a writer cannot in all cases visit artistic justice on every one of his characters; for, in real life, retribution does not always appear to follow crime. But, whatever *appearances* may be, who is there that does not feel that virtue is ever its own reward, and vice its own punishment? and what one of my readers would exchange "a quiet conscience, void of offence toward God and toward man," for the princely fortune of John Hallet—who is *still* the great merchant, the "exemplary citizen," the "honest man"?

Digitized by Google

LAST WORDS.

WHOEVER comes before the American public in a time of great *deeds*, like this, with mere *words*, should have no idle story to tell. He should have something to say; some fact to relate, or truth to communicate, which may awaken his countrymen to a true estimate of their interests, or a true sense of their duties.

The writer of this book *has* something to say; some facts to relate which have not been told; some truths to communicate about Southern life and society, which the public ought to know. Some of these facts, gathered during sixteen years of intimate business and social intercourse with the planters and merchants of the South, he has endeavored to embody in this volume.

He has woven them into a story, but they are nevertheless facts, and all of them, excepting one, occurred under his own observation. That one—the death of old Jack—was communicated to him, as a fact, by his friend, Dr. W. H. Holcombe, of Waterproof, La., now an officer in the confederate army.

The author does not mean to say that his story is true as a connected whole. It is not. In it, persons are brought into intimate relations who never had any connection in life; events are grouped together which happened at widely differ-

Digitized by Google

ent times; and events are described as occurring in the vicinity of Newbern—the slave auction, for instance—parts of which occurred in Alabama, parts in Georgia, and parts in Louisiana. But all of the characters he has described *have* lived, and all of the events he has related *have* transpired. He would not, however, have the reader believe that all which he says of himself is true. Some of it is; some of it is not. The story needed something to revolve around; and, as he commenced by using the personal pronoun, he continued its use, even in parts—like the scenes with Hallet—wherein the *I* stands for altogether another individual.

The real name of the character whom he has called Selma (he can state this without wounding the feelings of any one, as none of her relatives are now living), was Selma Winchester. She was educated at Cambridge, Mass., was a slave, and died of a broken heart shortly after being put at menial labor in her mother-in-law's kitchen. Her character and appearance, even the costume she wore on the occasion of her visit to the opera—a scene which many residents of Boston and vicinity will remember—is attempted to be described literally. She was not the daughter of Preston; her father was a very different sort of man. Nor was she sold at auction. The young woman who was engaged to "Frank Mandell," and bought at that sale by her brother, was equally as accomplished, though not so beautiful as Selma. She committed suicide, as herein related. The author has blended the two characters into one, but in no particular has he departed from the truth.

The gentleman called Preston in the story was for many years one of the writer's correspondents. He had two wives, such as are described, and was the father of Joe and Rosey,

Digitized by Google

whose connection was as is related. He was *not* the owner of "Boss Joe." The original of that character belonged (and the writer trusts still belongs) to a cotton planter in Alabama. He managed two hundred hands, and in no respect is he overdrawn in the story. His sermon is repeated from memory, and is far inferior to the original. He was a Swedenborgian, and one of the finest natural orators the writer ever listened to. Old Deborah was his mother, and died comfortably in her bed. The old woman who fell dead on the auction block, was the nurse of the young woman who was engaged to Frank. The excitement of the scene, and her anxiety for her "young missus," killed her.

Larkin's real name is Jacob Larkin. He was at one time connected with the person called Hallet. He was well known in many parts of the South, and relinquished negro-trading under circumstances similar to those related in the story. He is now—though a rebel in arms against his country—an honest man.

John Hallet, the writer is sorry to say, is also a real character; but he does not disgrace the good city of Boston. He operates on a wider field.

* * * * * *

That most excellent woman, Mrs. C. M. Kirkland, said to the author, shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter: "If you cannot shoulder a musket, you can blow a bugle." In this, and in a previous book, he has attempted to blow that bugle. If the blasts are not as musical as they might be, he has no apology to make for them. They have, at least, the ring of *truth;* and whether they please the public ear, or not, the author is

Digitized by Google

satisfied. It is no unimportant part of the great war for freedom to know the social condition of our enemies, and the actual influence of the institution which inspires such hatred for us. Knowing the truth, we can better determine whether it should form a part of our policy to oppose or sustain that institution.

THE END.

Digitized by Google

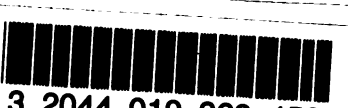
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

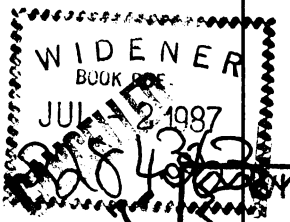
Digitized by Google

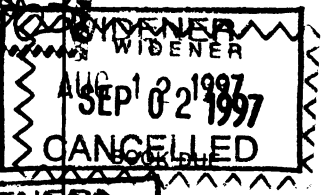
Acme
Bookbinding Co., Inc.
300 Summer Street
Boston, Mass. 02210

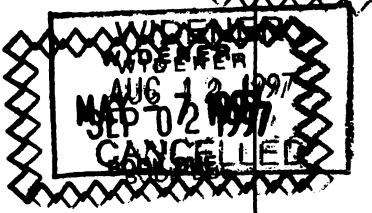
Digitized by Google

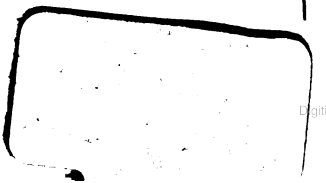

3 2044 019 369 453

THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.









Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google